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A. S. Steele  
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THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE  
RALLIEMENT DES CREDITISTES AND THE  
NATIONAL SOCIAL CREDIT PARTY:  
AN ATTITUDINAL EXPLANATION

THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE RALLIEMENT DES CREDITISTES  
AND THE NATIONAL SOCIAL CREDIT PARTY

RATIONALISATION

Report prepared for the  
Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism

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July, 1966.

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THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE RALLIEMENT DES CREDITISTES  
AND THE NATIONAL SOCIAL CREDIT PARTY:

AN ATTITUDINAL EXPLANATION

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## GENERAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

(VOLUME I)

PREFACE: Some Methodological Explanations . . . . .	i
-----------------------------------------------------	---

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
I GENERAL INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II DEFINITIONS, FRAMEWORK, AND MODEL. . . . .	5
III HISTORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIAL CREDIT (ENGLISH CANADA) AND CREDITISTES (FRENCH CANADA): A DESCRIPTION OF SCHISMATIC ACTION. .	20
	(VOLUME II)
IV ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS CAUSING THE SPLIT: AN ATTITUDINAL EXPLANATION . . . . .	114
V CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	243

ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE SPLIT  
AN ATTITUDINAL EXPLANATION . . . . .

1. A consideration of possible factors  
other than attitudes . . . . .
2. Attitudinal differences as general  
factors . . . . .
3. Socioeconomic problems: corporate behaviour  
and the role of the state and industry . . . . .
4. Creditist ideology and culture: particular  
political beliefs . . . . .
5. The nature of politics in general . . . . .
6. Religious and political affiliation . . . . .
7. Personal characteristics and leadership . . . . .



## DETAILED TABLE OF CONTENTS

### (VOLUME I)

PREFACE: Some Methodological Explanations . . . . .	i
-----------------------------------------------------	---

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
I GENERAL INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II DEFINITIONS, FRAMEWORK AND MODEL . . . . .	5
A) Definitions. . . . .	5
B) Framework and model . . . . .	12
III HISTORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIAL CREDIT (ENGLISH CANADA) AND CREDITISTES (FRENCH CANADA) A DESCRIPTION OF SCHISMATIC ACTION . .	20
A) The National Social Credit Association and the Union des Electeurs, 1944-58 . . . .	20
B) The National Social Credit Party and the Ralliement des Créditistes, 1958-63. . . . .	58
(VOLUME II)	
IV ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE SPLIT: AN ATTITUDINAL EXPLANATION . . . . .	114
A) A consideration of possible factors other than attitudes . . . . .	114
B) Orientational differences as a causal factor . . . . .	121
C) Methodological problems: Verba's categories and French-Canadian political culture. . . .	126
D) Creditiste ideology and culture: primitive political beliefs . . . . .	140
1) the nature of politics in general . . . .	141
2) religion and politics . . . . .	142
3) beliefs about authority and leadership. .	150



<u>CHAPTER</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
4) attitudes towards ideologies and belief systems . . . . .		155
5) attitudes towards democracy. . . . .		169
E) The first dimension of Creditiste culture: national identity . . . . .		174
1) French-Canadians and/or Catholics . . .		174
2) Quebec versus the rest of Canada . . . .		180
3) Creditiste perception of western Social Creditors. . . . .		192
F) The second dimension of Creditiste culture: identification with one's fellow-citizens .		199
1) perceived class differences . . . . .		199
2) sense of Creditiste camaraderie. . . . .		209
G) The third dimension of Creditiste culture: attitudes towards governmental output . . .		217
1) the relation between the economic and political system: the distribution of rewards . . . . .		218
2) social welfare and socialism . . . . .		232
H) The fourth dimension of Creditiste culture: attitudes towards the process of political decision-making . . . . .		234
1) sense of efficacy. . . . .		234
2) provincial participation . . . . .		239
V CONCLUSIONS . . . . .		243



## PREFACE: SOME METHODOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

This study is an attempt to account for the split between the Ralliement des Créditistes and the National Social Credit Party. The author decided at a very early stage that the focus of his study would be on the participants in this split. It was the schismatic behaviour of the Social Credit party actors which had to be explained in some systematic fashion.

After a few preliminary interviews, it became apparent that differences in the political orientation of the actors - the sets of interrelated beliefs, attitudes and postures towards political action which define a person's subjective relation to his political environment - provided the most satisfactory single-factor explanation of the schismatic behaviour of these actors. At that point the author decided to make the depth interview the basis of his methodological approach.

The major actors involved in the split were: from the West, Robert Thompson (Red Deer), the Social Credit Leader, and his three western colleagues, H. A. Olson (Medicine Hat), Bert Leboe (Cariboo) and A. B. Patterson (Fraser Valley). Involved also in a more secondary role were: Martin Kelln of Saskatchewan, President of the National Credit Association, Orvis Kennedy, President of the National Social Credit League of Alberta and Mr. Manning the



Premier of Alberta. In Quebec the men most directly involved were as follows: On one side were Réal Caouette (Villeneuve), the Ralliement leader, Laurent Legault, the Ralliement President, Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe) now deputy leader, then a vice-president of the Ralliement and of the National Party, and the 11 other MPs from Quebec who followed Caouette after the split. On the other side were Dr. Guy Marcoux (Quebec-Montmorency), the party whip, Fernand Ouellet, the national organizer for eastern Canada, and the six other Quebec Social Credit MPs who remained loyal to Robert Thompson. The role of some of the organizers in certain key constituencies was also significant, at least in determining the ultimate form and consequences of the split. Most of the foregoing were interviewed by the author at least once, and some were interviewed on several occasions.

Those interviewed once include: Thompson, Grégoire, Chapdelaine, and organizers in Rouyn-Noranda, Saguenay-Lac St. Jean, Chicoutimi, Portneuf, Sherbrooke, Compton-Frontenac, Quebec City, Lévis, Trois Rivières, Beauce and Charlevoix. Those interviewed on several occasions include Réal Caouette, Laurent Legault, Dr. Guy Marcoux, and Jean-Louis Frenette. All of these interviews were conducted between April, 1964 and August, 1965, and all but a few were recorded. No attempt will be made to footnote the quotations used. The speaker



is generally identified by a letter of the alphabet, in order to protect his anonymity. The code identifying the speakers by their real names, as well as the typewritten interview sheets bearing their statements in full may be obtained by permission of the author.

Chapters I and II are intended merely to set the study within a general framework, and to outline the model used to systematize the data. Chapter III is an attempt to sketch chronologically and historically the major schismatic behavioural patterns of both the earlier Social Credit alliance between the Alberta wing led by Solon Low and the Quebec-based Union des Electeurs and the most recent association between the National Social Credit Party and the Ralliement. Data on the former split were obtained largely from the Quebec newspaper Vers Demain and the Low Papers (just recently released), although some interviews were also used. Data on the historical aspects of the latter (National Social Credit-Ralliement) association were obtained from newspapers, first-hand observation, and particularly from interviews.

Chapter IV is the analytic and explanatory section of the study. As such it is its single most important section. The concept of "political culture" is defined and applied here to the data obtained from interviews.



Chapter V is an attempt to broaden the analysis in chapter IV by exploring socio-economic factors related both to the Social Credit actors and to French- and English-Canadians as a whole. It also integrates some of the published studies of Social Credit in Quebec particularly related to the voter. Most important, it attempts to set out what in a more general sense might be of greatest interest to the Commissioners for their final report.



## CHAPTER I: GENERAL INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

There appear to be two primary factors which determine the nature of all political parties in the Province of Quebec:

1) The Canadian political system is a federal system and hence there are at least two arenas for party competition - a federal or national arena and a provincial arena: 2) The overriding conception among all French Canadians that political parties, regardless of the particular labels or slogans they espouse, are primarily vehicles for the protection and preservation of French-Canadian interests, language, culture and ethnic integrity and national identity, in the face of the overwhelming majority of English-speaking Canadians in the rest of Canada. Any political party seeking a broad basis of support in the province of Quebec, either federally or provincially, must project the image of the protector and preserver of the French-Canadian nation. Hence the task of a member of parliament from Quebec in federal politics is not so much to legislate, as to ensure the non-legislation of any bill detrimental to the national interests of French Canadians.

It appears that although certain parties in various provinces of Canada share the same name, they do in fact differ.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter as well as the next, was written by Mr. Aster in collaboration with the author.



A Quebec member of the Liberal or Conservative party is more akin to his fellow Quebecker of an alternate party than he is to a member of the same party but from a different province. Evidently, sharing the same opinions, attitudes, and values about political objects is not a function of party affiliation but rather a function of regional origins or possibly national origins.

The experience of fragmentation within each of the major political parties in Canada in the past three years seems to support this hypothesis. This fragmentation has been characterized by the assertion of independence on the part of the French Canadian elements within each of the four Federal political parties. A separate Quebec wing has been set up in each party, whose aim was to achieve a certain sense of independence from the National party organization, while operating in close alliance, at election time, with the National organization. The records show a split within the Liberal party of Canada through the formation of the Quebec Liberal Federation; the Conservative party of Canada experienced a similar split highlighted by the actions of the Quebec deputy of the party - Leon Balcer - who asserted the independent character of French Canadian Conservatives; the New Democratic Party experienced the formation of the Parti Socialiste de Québec; and the Social Credit party of Canada split into the Ralliement Des Créditistes and the original party.



There are two major kinds of explanations for the occurrence of these party splits in the last three years. The first kind attributes these events to the reassertion of French Canadian Nationalism, associated with the revolutionary changes that have taken place in the Province of Quebec since 1960. It asserts the primacy and viability of National political parties in Canada and then proceeds to account for these party splits by an appeal to a series of specific and unique political events (all related to the reassertion of French-Canadian nationalism). On the other hand, these splits might be interpreted as indicating a fundamental truth concerning the fragmentary tendencies inherent in the nature and structure of all National political parties in Canada, and the experience of the preceding three years can afford significant new insights into the character of these parties. The task of political explanation is hence to decide which of these two kinds of explanations affords a more comprehensive and powerful argument, or whether the two ought to be considered as complementary.

The party I choose to focus on for purposes of this study is the Social Credit Party of Canada. Of all the parties, it seems to me to be most apt for this kind of inquiry. First, it has a unique and clearly distinguishable history and evolution in Canada. Secondly, the split within the party was most obvious and accessible for the outside observer in terms of events and personalities. Thirdly, the research materials



available on the Social Credit Party in Alberta at this particular time are extensive, whereas those on the Créditiste Movement of Quebec are almost non-existent. It seems worthwhile, therefore, to capitalize on our extensive information about the former in order to add to our knowledge of the latter. Finally, and most important, the Social Credit-Créditiste conflict seems to be a microcosm of the larger struggle presently involving all Canadians: the crisis in the Confederation partnership.



CHAPTER II: DEFINITIONS, FRAMEWORK AND MODELA) DEFINITIONS

Political parties have been characterized as "fighting organizations"<sup>1</sup>. This characterization immediately suggests a further range of possible analytic categories. As in all "fighting" situations, one can locate a ring, or more adequately, we can term it an arena for the combat situation. There may exist more than one arena, as for example in a Federal system where we can locate a separate provincial and federal arena. Also there might be a municipal arena, an urban vs. a rural arena, etc. Secondly, one can suggest certain goals or ends for the combat, i.e. one can suggest a direction for one's activities. Now, these goals may vary in range and scope depending on the participants. (The range and scope of the goals will help define the participants so that a political movement is characterized by a more narrow set of goals than is a political party.) Thirdly, one can suggest certain strategies for the combatants -- the manner in which one pursues the desired range and scope of goals. One's strategies depend upon the nature of the arena or arenas selected for the "fighting" situation and on the range and scope of the goals pursued.

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<sup>1</sup> C.J. Friedrich, Constitutional Government and Democracy (New York, 1950) p. 419. It is impossible to term this a definition. Instead, it is the usual way of referring to a known phenomenon.



Although the categories suggested here are useful as analytic devices in the investigation of political parties, they are primarily based on a particular conception of the nature and function of a political party. What they neglect is the broader contextual treatment of the environment or setting against which all political behaviour takes place.<sup>1</sup> These environmental factors can be viewed as the prior elements determining the nature and function of political parties and as the crucial determinants of the participants' perspectives of the arena, ends, and strategies.<sup>2</sup>

Let us now turn to an elaboration of the "environmental factors" mentioned above. According to H.D. Lasswell, we can view the social process as a process in which participants with certain perspectives act in order to achieve certain goal values affecting resources through institutions. All acts take place within a certain environment which consists "of the events other than the act itself within which the act is included".<sup>3</sup> The political process is a distinctive process within the social process with

<sup>1</sup> The notion of an arena conveys this but only in the marginal sense of a "ring", not in the extensive sense of all the various factors surrounding the arena and determining its nature.

<sup>2</sup> One is restricted to investigating the "participants' perspectives" for it is these patterns of "identities, expectations and demands" which will determine their political behaviour and the task of the political scientist is the explanation of political behaviours. Here we are using the model of the social and political process developed by H.D. Lasswell and A. Kaplan in Power and Society. (N.Y. 1963).

<sup>3</sup> H.D. Lasswell, Power and Society, p. 4.



political actors, political values (power) and a political environment for political acts.

The term we shall apply to this environment or setting for political actors is political culture.<sup>1</sup> A political culture can be characterized as the constellation and complex of particular factors which make up the setting or environment for political acts and behaviours. The concept political culture attempts to locate political acts and behaviours in a context which emphasizes the influence a setting or environment has "upon actors, upon responses to acts and upon the evocation of feelings and reactions".<sup>2</sup> It is crucially necessary here to distinguish between an act and behaviour. A regularized and continuing pattern of acts constitutes a behaviour. (Hence we can distinguish between a neurotic act and neurotic behaviour). Political behaviour is defined as a regularized and continuing pattern of political acts. A political party is here defined as an institutionalized vehicle for aggregating political behaviours in order to effect a certain range of ongoing outcomes. The task of the political analyst is to explain political behaviours and the explanation of political parties becomes the explanation of the pattern of political behaviours which constitutes a political party.

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<sup>1</sup> As in the social process we can speak of culture, so in the political process we can speak of political culture. (See Lasswell, pp. 47 - 51.)

<sup>2</sup> M. Edelman, The Symbolic Uses of Politics. (Illinois, 1964).



Harry Eckstein operationally defines<sup>1</sup> the concept political culture as referring "in general to politically relevant values (purposive desires), cognitions (conceptions of the nature of reality), and expressive symbols, from language to visual ceremony. It refers in particular to the internalized expectations in terms of which the political roles of individuals are defined and through which political institutions (in the sense of regularized behaviour patterns) come into being".<sup>2</sup> A further refinement of this operational definition is offered by Almond and Verba in The Civic Culture -- "the term political culture thus refers to the specifically political orientations ... it is a set of orientations towards a special set of social objects and processes ... It includes, 1) cognitive orientations, that is knowledge of and belief about the political system, its roles and the incumbents of these roles, its inputs and its outputs; 2) affective orientation or feelings about the political system, its roles, personnel and performance and 3) evaluational orientations of the judgements and opinions about political objects that typically involve the combination of value, standards and criteria with information and feelings".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An operational definition is here opposed to the conceptual definition suggested previously.

<sup>2</sup> H. Eckstein and D. Apter (eds.) Comparative Politics, a Reader (Glencoe, 1964), p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> G. Almond and S. Verba. The Civic Culture. (Princeton 1963) pp. 13-15.



It is vital to note that both operational definitions direct one's research towards values, attitudes, opinions. These can be researched by a variety of means. The ones most successfully employed in this paper were interviews and content analysis of speeches, published books, statements of the participants and actors. In this fashion, one of the most difficult of the numerous methodological problems involved in the investigation of political culture was overcome.<sup>1</sup>

As political parties are "institutionalized vehicles for aggregating political behaviours in order to effect a certain range of ongoing outcomes" and political behaviours are researchable in terms of a contextual approach, i.e. political culture, a new and prior dimension can be added to our analysis of political parties - one which logically antidotes our previous analytic categories and in a definite sense tends to determine them.

Thus far we have argued that political parties are analyzable in terms of political culture; that is, either the constellation and complex of particular factors which make up the setting for political behaviours and acts, or the values, cognitions and expressive symbols upon which political behaviour is premised. There remains a further level at which one can

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<sup>1</sup> The relationship between opinions, attitudes and beliefs (the operational indices of political culture) and political behaviour (the operational manifestation of political parties) is elaborated further in our causal model explaining "overt political acts" and "behaviours".



analyze political parties -- in terms of their political ideology. Every political party embraces an overt or covert political ideology. The task of the political analyst is to uncover this political ideology. The term political ideology is used here "to stand for an organization of opinions, attitudes and values -- a way of thinking about man and society. We may speak of an individual's total ideology or of his ideology with respect to different areas of social life; politics, economics, religion... . . . (ideologies) which exist at a particular time are results of both historical processes and of contemporary social events".<sup>1</sup> A political ideology is hence an institutionalized set or an organization of beliefs, opinions, attitudes, values about political objects. Every political party embraces a certain set of beliefs and opinions about political objects.

If we have suggested two new ways of analyzing political parties, it is necessary to distinguish clearly between them, for both incorporate the same operational definitions, namely attitudes, values and opinions. First, the definition of political ideology hinges upon an "organization" of opinions, etc.; that is to say there exists a certain discernible pattern and structure to these opinions, an organized set of attitudes, a map of beliefs. Coupled to this patterned structure is a direction and intensity. A political ideology as defined above

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<sup>1</sup> T.W. Adorno et. al. The Authoritarian Personality (New York, Harper, 1950). P. 2.



not only deals with our beliefs, attitudes and opinions concerning time past and present, but also with time future. A political ideology attempts to channel our behaviour in a certain direction -- it has a "direction-orientation". As such, it manifests an articulated degree of consciousness and intensity of beliefs and attitudes. Political culture, while also a complex of beliefs, etc., does not manifest the time future or direction-orientation of a political ideology. It exerts a more residual and less conscious influence on political behaviour than does a political ideology and while providing us with a certain culturally based set of beliefs, attitudes and opinions about political reality, it lacks the "direction-orientation" influence on our political behaviour.<sup>1</sup>

It seems from our discussion that analyzing political parties in terms of political culture and political ideology revolves around the analysis of attitudes, opinions and beliefs, their structure, pattern, direction-orientation and intensity. However, we have previously redefined political parties not as "fighting organizations", but as institutionalized vehicles for aggregating political behaviours in order to effect a certain range of ongoing outcomes. The crucial term in our definition is obviously political behaviours and we must now attempt to

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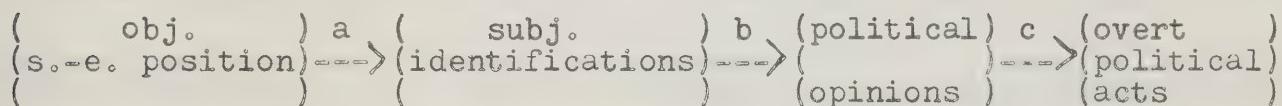
<sup>1</sup> It is this direction-orientation influence on political behaviour that allows one to analyze political ideology in terms of its functions for an individual, a group and a society -- see R. Lane, Political Ideology, (The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962), p. 424.



relate political behaviour to political values, cognitions and beliefs -- political culture -- and to a direction-oriented organization of political attitudes, opinions, beliefs and values -- political ideology.

#### B) FRAMEWORK AND MODEL

Robert Dahl has suggested a paradigm of how "a social determinist might postulate a chain of causation in which one's overt political acts (the basis of political behaviours in our vocabulary) are completely determined by one's socio-economic position".<sup>1</sup>



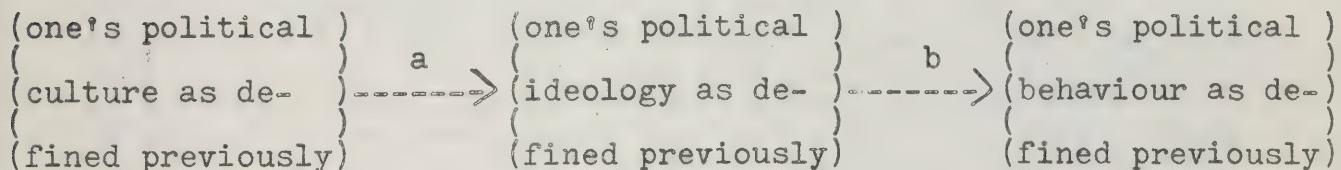
Although strict social determinists are difficult to find, one can, nonetheless, retain a high degree of credibility in the direction and influence of the various categories, if not the causal connections of the chain. As he himself is quick to point out "the link at c between political opinions and overt political acts is generally stronger among educated persons, intellectuals and political activists than among the general

<sup>1</sup> R. Dahl (ed.) Political Oppositions in Western Democracies (Yale U. Press, 1965), p. 370.



population; conversely, however, among these very groups the link at a and b connecting objective positions, identifications and political opinions may be somewhat weaker than among the general population. Thus with the general population the breakdown in the hypothetical causal chain of the social determinist is likely to occur closer to the terminal end, at c or b; but among the political elites, the break is more likely near the beginning, at a".<sup>1</sup>

Translating this paradigm of social causation into our terms and retaining the validity of this paradigm in terms of the direction and not the intensity of causation, we can claim:-



It will be noticed that we have temporarily<sup>2</sup> omitted the first term in Dahl's paradigm. The reasons for this are twofold: first, as he himself points out, among political activists or elite groups, the causal chain is weakest between socio-economic position and political culture. Hence, if one is attempting to explain

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 371

<sup>2</sup> See note 2, page 14.



the political behaviour of political activists or elites<sup>1</sup>, one can omit the first category of our paradigm<sup>2</sup>. Secondly, the methodological problems of researching the socio-economic position of a vast array of political participants was found to be too great an undertaking at the present moment.<sup>3</sup>

We must now turn to the basic problem of why our model deals with "one's political culture", "one's political ideology" and "one's political behaviours".

The most fundamental unit of behaviour obviously

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<sup>1</sup> The reasons for our treatment of the explanation of political parties as essentially the attempted explanation of the political behaviours of the elite members are a) the elites tend to engage in a wider range of political behaviours than do the rank and file whose most fundamental expression of political behaviour is voting. Hence, the phenomena to be explained are more extensive. b) The task of researching the political culture and political ideology of the elite is a more manageable one than that of researching the political culture and ideology of the rank and file.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, however, we shall analyze the socio-economic characteristics of the elite members later in an effort to broaden and expand our hypothesis in Chapter IV. See Chapter V below.

<sup>3</sup> A questionnaire was distributed to all active members (c. 400) at the 1964 Summer Congress of the Ralliement des Créditistes, but due to unusual sensitivity to many questions about religion, occupation and attitudes towards minorities, returns were very low.



is the individual and since we are to analyze opinions, attitudes and beliefs, we must approach them operationally as the individual's attitudes, opinions and beliefs. This strategy is not to be taken as an attempt to minimize the importance of groups in the political process, but rather as a logical starting point dictated by the demands of operational political research. A group's behaviours, attitudes and opinions are always constructed out of a pattern of individual behaviours, attitudes and opinions.

The task of political analysis and model building involves not only distinguishing between concepts, but relating them as well. We have been engaged in the task of distinction -- distinguishing between political culture and political ideology and the different categories in our model aimed at the explanation of political behaviour. The task of "relation" attempts to explain how a particular pattern of political behaviour can be caused by a particular political ideology which in turn is caused by a particular political culture. More particularly, we must attempt to relate the concepts of political party, political ideology and political culture.<sup>1</sup>

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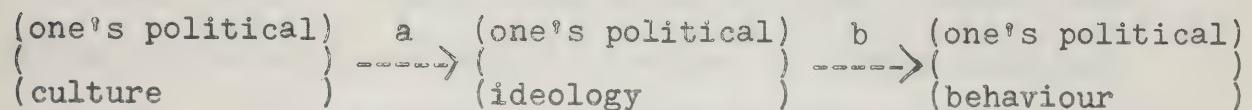
<sup>1</sup> Although we have outlined a model of causation between these various concepts, we have not explained the nature of causation between these categories.



The task we face immediately is locating the phenomena we characterize as a political party on the complex map of social reality. There are four basic prerequisites by which we can characterize a certain set of interactions as a political party. The first prerequisite is that of "political behaviours". Here we return to our definition of "political behaviours", as a regularized and continuing pattern of political acts. Numerous political acts which take place in the political arena do not evolve into political behaviours for they do not constitute "a regularized and continuing pattern of political acts"; that is to say they are single occurrences without regularity or continuity. The second prerequisite is that one should be able to aggregate these "regularized and continuing pattern of political acts" or political behaviours; that is, one should be able to abstract a more general (aggregate) pattern or series of patterns from observation of the ensemble of individual political behaviours. This implies first that there is a certain range of behaviours, and secondly that the range of behaviours expressed by a political party shall have a certain commonality amongst them. Thirdly, a political party must be able to influence behaviours (and hence win support and supporters). In this sense it is a fighting machine. The fourth prerequisite is that it must have an institutionalized way of achieving the previous three. An "institutionalized way" refers to a recurring pattern of discernible practices.



Various political behaviours will suggest a variety of political parties which will be premised on a corresponding variety of political ideologies and political cultures or subcultures.<sup>1</sup> We have previously suggested a paradigm for the explanation of political behaviour:



If one uses aggregate terms, one can speak of the political culture of a particular sector of a nation's population (i.e. the political sub-culture) causing a corresponding political ideology which in turn causes a unique political party.<sup>2</sup>

One is now confronted by the task of explaining the particular relation between these three categories -- political culture or sub-culture, political ideology and political party. If a particular political culture or sub-culture is to cause a corresponding political ideology which in turn causes a unique

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<sup>1</sup> The concept "political sub-culture" is distinguished from the concept "political culture" by Verba in L. Rye and S. Verba (eds) Political Culture and Political Development

(Princeton U. Press, 1965). A "political sub-culture" exists when there is a sub-group of society whose fundamental assumptions about politics differ from the assumptions predominant in that society. See Chapter IV, below, p. The two concepts can be used interchangeably, however, in the analysis presented in this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The underlying assumption here is that there may be a variety of political cultures which constitutes any one political nation. The wider the divergence and numerical range of political cultures, the more political parties.



political party (i.e. a pattern of political behaviours) the measure of this ability becomes a matter of congruence. That is to say a particular political sub-culture which is not congruent with an articulated political ideology cannot possibly cause a certain pattern of political behaviours and a unique political party.<sup>1</sup> Having established a certain causal chain which culminates in political behaviour or "overt political actions" (in Dahl's terms) we can now suggest reasons for the success<sup>2</sup> or nonsuccess of a political party. The most obvious reason would be a break in the causal chain i.e. a schism in the transmission of factors from a to b. A successful transmission from a to b we can call 'congruence'.

With our model clearly defined and the relationships between the terms of our model clearly outlined, we can now proceed to generate a range of hypotheses and a strategy of inquiry into the nature and evolution of the Social Credit Party of Canada and the Créditiste Party of Quebec. As we have explained, the most crucial category in the definition and location of a political party is political behaviour. A certain variety and range of political behaviours as they are expressed in

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<sup>1</sup> The term "congruence" is derived from the concept as used by Robert Lane in Political Ideology, p. 426 and is used to refer to the "fit of one's ideas to one's life experience".

<sup>2</sup> Success is here defined as the ability to affect ongoing outcomes on a regular and continuous basis over a significant period of time.



political parties suggests the existence of a variety and range in political cultures or sub-cultures. Likewise, the variety and range in political sub-cultures and political ideologies expressed in interviews of party members suggests an explanation of the variety and range of party behaviours. We shall now proceed to examine the Social Credit Party from both perspectives.



CHAPTER III: HISTORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN SOCIAL CREDIT  
(ENGLISH CANADA) AND CREDITISTES (FRENCH  
CANADA): A DESCRIPTION OF SCHISMATIC BEHAVIOURAL  
PATTERNS.

All the national Canadian political parties are little more than loose groupings of local, constituency and provincial associations which are bound to each other by rather tenuous common aims, interests and accommodations. The Social Credit party, largely by virtue of its peculiar ideological bent and techniques of finance, appears to be the most loosely organized of all these parties. The analyst of the 1963 Social Credit split, then, is compelled to go beyond mere description of the behavioural patterns of that split itself (since the ties between the two wings were so tenuous anyway). He must also outline the factors which brought two essentially separate, incompatible provincial parties (Alberta and Quebec) together in the first place, and describe and account for earlier patterns of split between the two provincial wings

A) THE NATIONAL SOCIAL CREDIT ASSOCIATION AND THE UNION  
DES ELECTEURS, 1944-58.

The history of the relationship between English-speaking and French-speaking sections of Social Credit begins with the founding of the Social Credit movement in Quebec in 1936. Louis Even, a Gardenvale journalist, had acquired his initial education



in Social Credit doctrine from the writings of western Social Crediters as well as from those of the original formulator of the theory, Major Douglas.<sup>1</sup> He helped found the "Ligue du Crédit Social de la Province de Québec" in May of the same year, the first French-speaking Social Credit group in Canada. He gathered around him French-Canadians who had learned their Social Credit from westerners, had visited Alberta, and had established connections with people from various parts of English-speaking Canada who were interested in Social Credit. The Ligue was modelled on the Alberta organization in its attempt to spread small cells composed of Social Credit members to new locales.<sup>2</sup> But the Ligue lacked the elan and organization generated in the Aberhart study circles, and it was soon replaced by a movement which concentrated more on political education than on organization, and which centered around the newspaper Vers Demain. In time, the movement was to acquire the name "Union des Electeurs", after Major Douglas' group in England, and it became the focal point for all French-speaking Social Credit action.

All of the members of the Créditiste movement were French-

<sup>1</sup> Major Douglas, a Britisher, first formulated his theory in 1918 in a pamphlet entitled "Social Credit". He later expanded it in a series of books, pamphlets and articles, and established a movement in Britain based on the same ideas. It had little success.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed description of the organization of the Alberta movement see J.A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement of Alberta, (U of Toronto, 1959), Chapters 3-7.



speaking Roman Catholics; very few had had extensive contact with people outside their ethnic community. It is not surprising, then, that Vers Demain adopted a stringent nationalist and Catholic tone from its very inception. In its first issue it declared that its articles would be "inspired by strong doses of the principles and teachings of the Catholic Church".<sup>1</sup> And it quickly adopted the traditional French-Canada stance in opposition to participation in foreign wars. From 1940 to 1944, the movement developed along its own lines with very little help from outside. The only link which the French-speaking group had with its western Canadian brothers was the feeling of camaraderie in the struggle to spread the Social Credit doctrine and realize the Social Credit dream.

Then in 1944, following the death of William Aberhart, the premier of Alberta, who had been the main force in the Alberta Social Credit movement from its beginnings in 1933, the Social Credit Association was founded. The impetus for its formation came originally from Aberhart, but it was Premier Manning, Aberhart's successor, and John Blackmore, the leader of the federal group, who appeared to take the final initiative in establishing it.<sup>2</sup> It was the first formal attempt to unify all the different wings of Social Credit into a single front

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<sup>1</sup> Vers Demain, Nov. 1, 1939, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> See Low Papers, letters from Blackmore to A. Turpin, Nov. 9, 1943, Even to A. Turpin, March 18, 1944, and Vers Demain, January 1, 1944.



for the purpose of promoting Social Credit on the federal level. The founding meeting was held in Toronto in April 1944. Eight provinces were represented in all, although the delegations from Quebec and Alberta outnumbered all the others by far. (There were 42 Quebec and 39 Alberta delegates but less than one half of the latter were entitled to vote). The convention was made completely bilingual, and Lucien Maynard, the French-Canadian Attorney-General of Alberta, was selected as the chairman. "The two languages were put on equal footing, each delegate speaking in the language which most suited him, and each obtaining in his own language the explanations he desired."<sup>1</sup> Solon Low, the Treasurer of the Social Credit Government of Alberta, was unanimously elected President of the new national association; J.-Ernest Grégoire, the most respected of the Créditistes in English Canada, former mayor of Quebec and a leader in l'Action Libérale Nationale, was unanimously acclaimed as vice-president. In addition to these two national officers, a delegate was chosen from each province to sit on a National Council; he was in each case the nominee of his own provincial Social Credit organization (where one existed).<sup>2</sup> Louis Even was selected to

<sup>1</sup> Vers Demain, April 15, 1944, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> The National Executive was later comprised of 3 members: Mr. Low, Mr. Grégoire as first vice-president and deputy national leader, and Major A.H. Dukes of British Columbia as second vice-president. The National Council was made up of the same three individuals and in addition, Dr. J.N. Haldeman, Chairman, who was the president of the Saskatchewan Social Credit League, Even from Quebec, and a representative from Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario.



represent Quebec. Common ground was reached between French- and English-speaking Social Crediters to the point where a three plank platform representing a united stand by all the Social Credit groups could be hammered out.<sup>1</sup> The editors of Vers Demain were satisfied to conclude that whereas "before the convention the Social Crediters of the West did not know the Créditistes of Quebec," they now had met them and had come away with a favourable impression. "Friction between French- and English-Canadians is undoubtedly because of their so minimal contact, and the resulting prejudices they form."<sup>2</sup>

But all was not so placid as it seemed on the surface. In the first place, the convention delegates had some difficulty reconciling the demands of the Alberta representatives for an immediate political organization with those of the Créditistes

<sup>1</sup> The programme was a broad and rather vague statement designed to paper over ideological differences between French- and English-Canadian wings. It included three demands: 1) a system of national accounting to compute the increase of real wealth in Canada, 2) a periodic national dividend to be awarded to every man, woman and child in Canada, the amount to be determined in accordance with the real wealth of Canada at any given time, and 3) an adjustment in retail prices which would both safeguard the legitimate profit of the producer and reduce selling prices to the level of purchasing power which would avoid both inflation and deflation. The latter two provided the major points of contention, and the accommodation reached was not entirely satisfactory, as later events were to point up. More serious ideological differences arose, however, over methods of organization in each province, and allegiance to Major Douglas' political ideas. See below, P. 30, ff.

<sup>2</sup> Vers Demain, April 15, 1944, p. 2.



from Quebec who "wanted an educational organization preparing the way to political organization without banishing immediate political organization where circumstances permitted it."<sup>1</sup> In the vote which was taken on this issue, 53 of the delegates favoured the Alberta position and 47 opposed it, a very narrow defeat for the Quebec representation.

Nor were the French-Canadians satisfied to accept it. J.-Ernest Grégoire, writing in Vers Demain shortly after the Toronto Convention, argued that the new association was a "specific political force, not a party".<sup>2</sup> It was "a political fraternity pursuing a particular end", but its various representatives would never be expected to be unanimous on Canadian problems. Its resolutions would not be binding on all its members. As vice-president, he might vote differently from Mr. Low, the President. There would be unity only on Social Credit legislation. How, then, could the Social Credit Association win and maintain power? The answer, in Mr. Grégoire's view, was that "it is not the essence of Social Credit to win power. The only *raison d'être* for the national organization was the refusal of the Liberals and Conservatives to put money in the hands of the consumers".<sup>3</sup> As members of a cabinet, Social

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., P. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Vers Demain, May 1, 1944.

<sup>3</sup> Vers Demain, May 1, 1944.



Credit M.P.'s would be free to vote as they wished on all questions apart from those which caused them to associate in the first place: those concerning the need to bring about social credit, (e.g. distribution of debt-free money).

It is clear that Mr. Grégoire's conception of Social Credit was very different from that held by most of the leading delegates from Alberta. Solon Low himself hoped that the Association would promote an old Alberta Social Credit idea of establishing a Social Credit government on the federal level which would implement social credit for all Canadians. The basis for associating was, in his view, to unite Social Credit forces across the country in an all-out assault on the bastion of the two old-line parties.<sup>1</sup>

The Quebec Créditistes were at first led to believe that Low at least was in accord with their view that what was being founded was a loose non-party organization, "an association on fundamental things".<sup>2</sup> It was not long, however, before the question of what constituted "fundamental things" was put to the test: on December 1, 1944, Vers Demain was forced to treat the issue of conscription.

<sup>1</sup> From selected correspondence, Low Papers. Mr. Low was less clear on the implications of this union for the Social Credit M.P.'s in Ottawa. If the Social Credit Association succeeded in electing enough members to Ottawa to win power, would it require the M.P.'s to vote cohesively on all major issues. Fortunately, it was never necessary for him to cope with this problem.

<sup>2</sup> Vers Demain, May 1, 1944.



The Créditistes had been attacked in Quebec for statements made by some of the Alberta M.P.'s in support of compulsory conscription of Canadian soldiers for overseas service.<sup>1</sup> Members of the Bloc Populaire, the nationalist party which was formed in Quebec specifically in order to oppose participation in the war, had written an open letter to the various dailies asking the leaders of the different political movements in Quebec to meet to plan a common course of action. Since the Créditistes were in association with the westerners, it was thought that they were in sympathy with these western views. But the editors of Vers Demain protested that the charges were totally unfounded. The Social Credit Association was not a political party, but only a loose association bound by Social Credit principles. The conscription issue was not "fundamental" to Social Credit, and indeed had nothing to do with it. In voting on the issue, the deputies in the House of Commons should be guided by the prevailing opinion of their local electors, rather than by any general policy. Solon Low himself had taken a similar stand in some of his recent statements.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The federal members were originally elected in 1940 as "New Democracy" candidates formally led by the conscriptionist Major Herridge. Most had renounced their earlier commitment to conscription in 1942 and that had helped make association possible in 1944. In the 1944 plebiscite, held in the fall, the Social Credit members again came out in favour of conscription. This stand had obvious repercussions in Quebec, despite the efforts of the Union leaders and of Mr. Low to disassociate Quebec from it.

<sup>2</sup> Vers Demain, Dec. 1, 1944.



The editors then expressed their own unequivocal opposition to any participation in the war, and their readiness to collaborate fully in any action designed to promote this view. And when Prime Minister Mackenzie King called for release from his earlier pledge not to impose conscription, the Union des Electeurs spared no words in castigating him.

It seemed that this particular stance was in line with the thinking of Association President Solon Low on party solidarity. In a declaration made before the Social Credit Convention of Saskatchewan on December 9, 1944, he is reported to have stated, "The Social Credit Association of Canada is not the apparatus of a political party. It is an association of provincial organizations, each of which is completely autonomous. Consequently, each is entirely free, within the meaning of the association, to express clearly its own opinion on every public question".<sup>1</sup> Moreover, one of the other Social Credit M.P.'s had stated in the House of Commons, "The Association has not yet had the opportunity to submit its programme to the approval of the Canadian population".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., Dec. 15, 1944. This statement, which appears to be correctly quoted, may be understood as an accurate reflection of Mr. Low's rather lame attempt to reconcile his own position on the 1944 plebiscite with his National Social Credit Association mandate and the opposition to conscription of Quebec.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



But this apparent unity of views masked what had been for the Association a most damaging confrontation. At the very point when the Association was attempting to establish itself on a firm basis, it was forced to mediate between two very divergent viewpoints. Resentment amounting to extreme bitterness was felt by exponents of both sides. The common understanding that was supposedly reached at Toronto was quickly dissipated. Mistrust was once again the rule.

The leaders of the Union des Electeurs made a number of conciliatory gestures intended to smooth over factional differences. On January 1, 1945, they declared their intention to collaborate in federal action to pressure the federal government to abolish bureaucratic controls, selective service, and so forth. In May, 1945, the Union entered 43 candidates in the general election, led by J.-Ernest Grégoire, the Vice-President of the Social Credit Association, in which they advocated largely national Social Credit policies. They failed to elect a single one. But the following year, when a Liberal seat in Pontiac fell vacant, Réal Caouette, the candidate for the seat in 1945, was nominated again by the Union Social Credit federal M.P.'s from the West joined forces with the Créditiste leaders to help him in the campaign.<sup>1</sup> This time, much to everyone's surprise (except perhaps his own), Caouette was

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<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Ron Gostick, then National Secretary-Treasurer of the Association, dated August 21, 1946, Mr. Low suggests that the Alberta M.P.'s had even taken charge particularly in English-speaking southern Pontiac.



elected. He took his place beside the handful of western Social Crediters who had been sent to Ottawa in 1945.

All of this, however, was again only a façade for what was an ever-widening breach in the philosophies of the two Social Credit wings. The Alberta wing had been growing more estranged from the basic ideas of Major Douglas, and in particular, the historical and political theories which he had begun to develop in the late 1930's. Douglas had turned away from economics to focus more and more attention on what he regarded as a growing world conspiracy of Jews and Masons, in alliance with finance and the Bolsheviks to capture control of the world. Feeling that it was the political parties and the various trappings of democracy which were weakening resistance to these forces, he began to attack them vociferously. As an alternative, he proposed a genuine "union of electors", an association of representatives who reflected the real will of their electors at all times.<sup>1</sup>

Two of the most important bodies in Alberta, the Social Credit Board (which was a committee of so-called "experts" responsible to the legislature and assigned the task of directing the economic policy of the province) and the Canadian Social Crediter, the Social Credit newspaper which had expanded

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<sup>1</sup> This concept of organization became a bone of some contention within the Social Credit Association. See below p. 33 ff.



its circulation well beyond the borders of Alberta in the 1940's, were strong supporters of Major Douglas.<sup>1</sup> They were regarded as the spearheads of what became known as the "Douglasite faction", in opposition to a group of so-called "realists" who concentrated on the earlier Douglas economic ideas as interpreted by Aberhart.

After the war the former began to reassert themselves within the Alberta Social Credit movement. The newspaper editors included thinly-veiled anti-semitic articles, many of them reprints from Douglas' newspaper, The Social Crediter. The annual reports of the Social Credit Board had less and less to do with economics; they were largely critical commentaries on the international and national political scene. In particular, they pointed to growing signs of supranational concentration in the United Nations, the Bretton Woods Conference, and UNESCO.

At the same time, the Social Crediters had slowly transformed themselves into an institutionalized party which became more orthodox in its doctrines. Premier Manning himself had taken the lead in this respect, by declaring that the major opponent of Social Credit was no longer the Money Power, but rather the socialists, as represented by the growing C.C.F. movement.

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<sup>1</sup> The former, in fact, was headed by a close associate of Douglas, L.D. Byrne, who had been chosen by the Major himself to represent him in Alberta on the request of the so-called "insurgents" in 1937. The editor of the latter was John Gillese, a Catholic and staunch Douglasite, who was later a central figure in the split between Quebec and the west.



Social Credit was projected as the ultimate defender of capitalism, rather than its arch-enemy, or even its reformer. In the 1944 provincial election many of the most bitter antagonists of Aberhart joined Manning in an all-out effort to "stop the socialists". The result was a resounding election victory, even greater than that of 1935.

It is not surprising, then, that when the final showdown came between the Douglasites and "realists" in 1947, after the Board had issued its report containing a vitriolic attack on capitalism, the Moneyed Power, democracy, and implicitly, the organization of the Alberta Social Credit League, Premier Manning came down on the side of the "realists". He purged the Social Credit Board, the Canadian Social Crediter editorial board, his own cabinet, and even the Social Credit League of all the leading "Douglasites".<sup>1</sup> From that point on, the Social Credit Movement in Alberta was no more than a traditional conservative political party, which, however, still paid lip-service to certain of its reform slogans and ideas.

The Manning purge, of course, reached into the ranks of the federal Social Credit M.P.'s and the Social Credit Association as well. Solon Low, like Manning, an old-time Social Crediter but pragmatic in his application of the doctrine

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<sup>1</sup> C.B. MacPherson, Democracy in Alberta (U. of Toronto Press, 1953), p. 21 ff.



astutely sided with the "realists".<sup>1</sup> Several of his associates were removed. The Association was transformed into a head office of a handful of conservative national politicians, seeking to extend their influence into other provinces. At the same time, it toned down the Douglas content in its propaganda materials. The Canadian Social Crediter, for which it acted as distributor, no longer carried the vitriolic message of the past. The federal M.P.'s became more tempered in their criticisms of orthodox finance.

The significant shift naturally had its reverberation in the Social Credit associations in other provinces. In Quebec, the largest of these, the Union des Electeurs had embarked on a scheme of "democratization", in which the candidates sponsored by the Union were no longer exclusively to be chosen by Créditistes. They were now the "mandators" of the people, joined in a non-partisan "union of electors" (as distinct from the former "union of Social Credit electors"). The "mandators" of the Union of Electors were put forth as true representatives of the people, joined in an extra-constitutional "parliament of

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<sup>1</sup> There is even some evidence that he might have encouraged Mr. Manning to take the action. For example, in a letter to Mr. Manning on March 29, 1947, Solon Low wrote "I feel that the Social Credit Board Report has made it very difficult for us down here. Press despatches distorted some of the recommendations, and one of the C.C.F. members used the press reports as a basis for lambasting us all over the lost last Friday... I do wish the Board would furnish us copies of their report prior to tabling them in the Legislature..." Low Papers.



"electors" which would lead the struggle against the "machines of corruption", the federal and provincial political parties. This was in line with Douglas' own anti-democratic political theory, as developed in the late 1930's and early 1940's. The Union leaders had attempted to extend this conception of organization to other provinces, but had been opposed by the Alberta and national leaders.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the anti-Semitic materials, and the attacks against the concentration of national and international finance guided by the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy, were given increasing space in the pages of Vers Demain. The editors of Vers Demain, using reprints from the Canadian Social Crediter, and Douglas' own newspaper, as well as their own prepared materials, devoted much of their discussion to such matters as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion as the valid expression of the Zionist plot, paraboles on "Abraham Rabinovitch, the Jewish banker", the movement to establish a state of Israel, etc.<sup>2</sup>

Thus at the very moment that the Alberta wing was becoming

<sup>1</sup> The struggle between advocates of the "union of electors" method of organization and that of the constituency associations of traditional political parties was most clearly manifested in the attempt by a dissident faction in Ontario led by Ron Gostick, a supporter of Even's ideas, to take over control of the Ontario Social Credit organization. Although supported by Quebec, it failed.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Vers Demain, Jan. 1, 1946, p. 3, and the 22 subsequent issues on the Protocols, Dec. 1, 1945 (The "Cohenneries of the Union Nationale"), Mar. 15, 1946. (A Light and a Force).



more moderate, the Quebec Social Crediters were retrenching themselves and reasserting their complete devotion to Major Douglas. They now had a representative in the House of Commons, in the person of Réal Caouette, chosen as the "mandator" for Pontiac, and then elected in the by-election of 1946. They narrowly missed electing another in the by-election of Richelieu-Verchères in December of the same year. Their movement seemed to be on the rise, and subscriptions to Vers Demain were nearing the 100,000 mark. Their concentration on political education, rather than political campaigning, in the tradition of Major Douglas, seemed at last to be yielding results.<sup>1</sup>

When the Alberta purge came in December, 1947, therefore, the leaders of the Union were very much out of sympathy with the new policies. This was expressed in a series of articles, which scolded the new leaders in Alberta for abandoning Social Credit. A most virulent attack on the entire leadership of the Social Credit Association, made by Louis Even in a closed

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The apparent strength of the Union of Electors did not go unnoticed in the West. Ron Gostick, then national Secretary-Treasurer, wrote to Solon Low on August 19, 1946, just before Caouette was elected, "A real live Union of electors up in Alberta would make life miserable for some members I know. I really believe that the dynamic drive will come from the East to carry Social Credit on to Ottawa -- and it's coming." Low Papers.



door session in January, found its way into the newspapers.<sup>1</sup> The Albertans and their associates retaliated by attacking the dictatorial methods used by the Union des Electeurs, as well as the leaders who guided the movement in Quebec (particularly Gilberte Côté-Mercier).<sup>2</sup> This led J.-Ernest Grégoire to resign his post as vice-president of the Social Credit Association of

<sup>1</sup> The attack was printed in Le Soleil, January 12, 1948, under the caption "War declared between Social Credit and the Union of Electors". In it, Mr. Even was reported to have said "The province of Quebec is the only place in the world where the Social Credit movement is not controlled by Communists, Free-Masons or ambitious people, and the Social Credit Leagues of Canada are infested with ambitious types, including the movement in Ontario and particularly those of the West". He was also quoted as saying "two-thirds of the Social Credit M.P.'s in Ottawa are free-masons, and free-masonry is controlled by the Jews". Of Manning, he is reported to have said "Manning and his group are ambitious politicians, who have sold out Social Credit". He also attacked the leaders who had purged the former director of the newspaper "because he is a Catholic, whom they replaced by a Communist, Taylor". In a subsequent letter to Solon Low, dated January 30, 1948, Even clarified some of his statements and attempted to set the record straight on others. But he did not deny that he had made them. In fact, in certain instances he unconsciously made them even stronger. For example, "I mentioned several times Premier Manning's name. I said that, as reported in the Social Crediter of England (Douglas' Secretariat), Mr. and Mrs. Manning were won to Zionism". Low Papers.

<sup>2</sup> The article, which appeared in the Canadian Social Crediter of January 22, 1948, was written by Dr. J.N. Haldeman, President of the Saskatchewan Social Credit League and chairman of the National Council of the Association. It charged, "Regarding the Union of Electors, and the Institute for Political Action, which is headed by Mr. Even, I have expressed my opinion freely in Social Credit Councils and to members of the Union of Electors that the Union of Electors use Communistic methods and morality and Fascist propaganda, although talking Social Credit. The Union of Electors use the Communist-Fascist methods of organization.... The Institute of Political Action is completely dictatorial in its set-up...." Low Papers.



Canada in January, 1948.<sup>1</sup> The Union des Electeurs withdrew from the Social Credit Association, on the formal grounds that the Manning group had forced the resignation of the editor and assistant editor of the Canadian Social Crediter, and had interfered in the functioning of the Association. It was apparent, however, that the breach emanated from much deeper feelings of hostility.<sup>2</sup> Following the lead of Quebec, representatives from five provinces worked to form a new association, called the "Canadian Movement of Douglas Social Credit,"<sup>3</sup> with both French and English language sections. A new journal was also founded under the direction of Ron Gostick, later an organizer of the rejuvenated association of 1960. It did not, however, last long.

In the ensuing months of 1948, most of the energies of the Union des Electeurs were channelled into the provincial election campaign, finally called for July of that year, in which the movement presented a full slate of 92 candidates for the first time. Urged on by many of the more politically-minded

<sup>1</sup> Letter from J.E. Grégoire to Solon Low, January 29, 1948.  
Low Papers.

<sup>2</sup> Such as the feeling that the "purge" conducted by Premier Manning was "anti-Catholic" in nature, and that Quebec had been deliberately excluded from all decisions taken by the National Council -- an anti-French-Canadian and anti-Catholic action. On this point, see below page 49 ff.

<sup>3</sup> The first initiatives to form this association had been taken even before the formal split in January, 1948.



younger members, the leaders of the movement drained their treasury and their energies, only to suffer complete defeat. Not a single candidate was elected, (although 140,000 votes were amassed by the Union).

The Union then began to turn away from electoral action to other forms of political participation. In the federal election of June, 1949, although 57 candidates were presented, much less effort and money were expended than in 1948. Just before the vote, the editors restated an old Union principle: that the Union was not a party but an "idée force" so that a vote for the Créditistes was not one for a change in administration, but rather for a complete revamping of the political and electoral systems. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that every candidate but one lost his deposit, and that even that one, Caouette, lost his seat.

From that point on Vers Demain concentrated its efforts on discouraging its subscribers from participation in elections, and channelling their energies into large publicity and pressure campaigns against such things as high taxes, excessive government spending and in favour of increases in old age pensions and family allowances. At the same time, relations with the western Social Crediters steadily deteriorated, so that by 1951 the federal M.P.'s under Low (of whom 10 were elected in 1949) were again the objects of a bitter attack by the editors of Vers Demain for allegedly advocating conscription



of Canadian soldiers for the Korean War.<sup>1</sup> The Union refused to participate either in the provincial election of 1952 or the federal election of the following year. No aid or support of any kind was given to the western Social Credit M.P.'s in their federal campaigns. The 15 Social Crediters (4 of them elected from British Columbia for the first time) were once again grouped with the other deputies as "agents of the Money Power". Contact between eastern and western branches had virtually ceased, except for a few bitter exchanges between Solon Low and Union leaders regarding support of old age pensions and family allowances, use of C.B.C. radio time, and sponsorship of candidates.<sup>2</sup>

For a while it looked as if the Quebec Créditistes had retired permanently from the electoral arena. In the years 1953-56 the "bérrets blancs" (as the Créditiste stalwarts were now called as a result of their adoption of a white beret as part of their symbolic image) redoubled their efforts to pressure the federal and provincial governments. At times they received a sympathetic hearing, but they were rarely able to gain anything in the way of concrete results. In early 1956, however, the

<sup>1</sup> Vers Demain, March 1, 1951, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Low Papers. Letters from Even to Low, October 17, 1951, from Low to Even, March 1, 1952, from Caouette to Low, September 16, 1952, from Low to Caouette, September 17, 1952, from Even to Low, January 10, 1953, and from Low to Even, January 24, 1953, and Low to Even, February 17, 1953.



provincial Liberals, led by René Hamel, decided to support the Créditiste campaign for a provincial credit bank which would issue loans to municipalities. This was a pretext for bringing the Social Crediters into a union of all forces opposing the Duplessis regime. In early April the union was consummated, and the directors of Vers Demain announced that four Créditistes were presenting themselves as Liberal candidates in the provincial election. One of these was Réal Caouette, Liberal candidate for Abitibi-East. This prompted Solon Low to condemn the Social Crediters of Quebec in the strongest terms, for what he termed "a moral and political error of the first degree".<sup>1</sup> In the following weeks he launched into an all-out attack on the Créditiste movement, labelling it "anti-Semitic and anti-Democratic", and led by "unintelligent people". He promised to establish a branch of his own federal Social Credit party in Quebec.<sup>2</sup>

The editors replied by attempting to refute Mr. Low point by point. Anti-semitism was non-existent either in Vers Demain or the Social Credit meetings. "Hundreds of

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<sup>1</sup> Vers Demain, May 15, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., June 1, 1956. In fact, in December 1952, Solon Low officially recognized a dissident Quebec group "La Ligue du Crédit Social du Québec" as affiliates of the National Social Credit Association. Letter to J. Edgar Bouchard, December 9, 1962. That organization did not, however, make much progress in its attempts at expansion in Quebec until 1957, when it merged with dissidents of the Union of Electeurs, under Caouette, to form the Ralliement.



Créditistes visit thousands of families each week, and never has a single one among them spoken against the Jews, nor against any other race. The families visited are the witnesses".<sup>1</sup> As for its alleged anti-democratic organization, the Union was, in Douglas' terms, the very opposite. By organizing citizens in order to obtain results, it was rejecting the usual form of the political party, and offering citizens the purest form of democracy. Mr. Low, on the other hand, had rejected this form of organization in 1948, in favour of the party. And this was one of the major precipitators of the split between the Union and the Social Credit Association.<sup>2</sup>

The proposition that he should establish a federal branch of Social Credit in Quebec was likewise laughable. Did Mr. Low know Quebec? Was he aware of the nature of the despotic government which had established a privileged caste in the province, and offered patronage everywhere? Low was assuming that the Créditistes, by co-operating with the provincial Liberals, were also making some agreement with the federal Liberals. This simply was not so. The aim of Social Credit was, moreover, to infiltrate other parties, as much as to combat them. How, then had any perfidy been committed?

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



To some extent, of course, the Union leaders were rationalizing a decision which had been taken largely for pragmatic reasons. Nevertheless, there was an element of ideological consistency in the argument which they made for the agreement with the Liberals. Social Credit was, after all, originally conceived as an educative rather than organizational partisan movement. The object of the movement was to convert as many people in Quebec to its cause as it could, using whatever tactics it thought were best. There was nothing in the doctrine which required them to play according to the rules of the party game. And this was what Mr. Low had seemed to demand. It is interesting that a somewhat similar explanation of their action in signing an affidavit supporting the federal Liberals in 1963 was offered by the six Créditistes. Most of them, moreover, were old "berets blancs" who had witnessed the earlier confrontation between Quebec and Alberta branches.<sup>1</sup>

This open clash between Mr. Low and the Créditistes was the final bitter pill in what had been a long series of disagreements. The confrontations seemed to stem not so much from a difference in ends as from a disagreement over means. Here Social Credit doctrine was supposed to have permitted a wide range of alternatives and options. But despite a seeming desire to allow a diversity of views within the Social Credit

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<sup>1</sup>

See below. P. 98 ff.



Association, issue after issue became a bone of contention between ever more hostile provincial wings. Problems which presumably ought to have been resolved by the normal mechanisms of debate and compromise were translated into two inflexible and incompatible positions. Why was this so?

The factor which seems best to explain this is the difference in the political orientations of the two wings. Certain general ideas and attitudes about politics were shared among the members of one group, which defined the limits within which the group could normally be expected to operate. Questions like conscription involved more than a mere choice of policy positions on what was essentially a disputable question. To the French-Canadian, conscription was a matter of national pride, historical wrong, minority rights. The question was hardly negotiable, although respect and tolerance for opposing views could easily have been attained.<sup>1</sup> What gave rise to the animosity over this question was the apparent inability of some western Social Crediters to appreciate just how strongly French-speaking Créditistes felt about the matter. It was a lack of comprehension, a failure to communicate, which

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<sup>1</sup> The agreement achieved in the April, 1944 convention was an example of this. And Mr. Low's attempt to explain the divergent views concerning conscription in terms of the policy laid down at this convention was conceived in the same way. An attempt to reach a more common ground between the two major provincial wings might have proved more salutary, however, for the National Association.



underlay the whole issue of conscription within Social Credit.<sup>1</sup>

The same could be said for the problem of doctrinal orthodoxy in relation to Major Douglas. The Créditistes considered themselves to be the only truly orthodox Social Crediters, particularly after the 1947 "purge". They clung tenaciously to the notion of the monthly dividend as a central tenet in the theory, even when Douglas himself had seemed to waffle on the point, and when alternative means for providing revenue for the average citizen (family allowances, pensions) had been put forth and implemented.<sup>2</sup> Likewise they were fervent believers in the "A + B theorem" as the key to Douglas' analysis of the economic system, and were unable even to accept a modification of it in the light of analytical criticism. It was for them, even more than for Douglas himself, an article of faith, a truism that needed no searching study or careful reflection to understand. Other aspects of the economic theory of Douglas were paid respectful lip-service, even when they were not fully comprehended or readily adaptable to a discussion

<sup>1</sup> Hence the agreement to disagree, rather than recourse to a more painful process of bargaining and mutual accommodation. Evidence for this interpretation may be found in the earlier pattern of Social Credit relations on the issue of conscription (1939-1942), in which the western wing of the party became the first advocates of "conscription of manpower" in Ottawa, in total disregard of the resolutions and sentiments of their Quebec co-ideologists.

<sup>2</sup> The Créditistes' claim was that these were merely "socialistic" schemes for redistributing income, since they were financed through taxation of some sort. The dividend was to be a "debt-free" payment. See Low Papers. Letters from Even to Low, October 17, 1951 and Low to Even, February 17, 1953.



of French-Canadian society. The "just price", the "cultural heritage", were notions which Douglas had carefully defined and Aberhart had applied as propaganda devices in the peculiar depressed conditions of Alberta of 1935. The editors of Vers Demain used these terms from time to time, without really attaching any clear meaning to them.<sup>1</sup>

The political ideas of Major Douglas were treated in a similar fashion. Douglas' opposition to economic and political concentration of any kind was central to the Créditiste analysis of the Quebec political scene in the late 1930's and early 1940's. When Douglas finally identified the forces of evil which were bringing about this concentration, the Union leaders accepted his explanation without much questioning or qualification. Jews, Masons, Bolsheviks, Nazis and Fascists were all part of the international conspiracy which reached into the very core of French-Canadian society. Democracy as a system was rotten, and political parties were corrupted through and through. The only thing that could be done was to establish a new form of pure democracy, a "union of electors", as Douglas had first suggested in 1935.

The Alberta leaders were much less fervent in their protests of orthodoxy. Elements in the A + B theorem were

<sup>1</sup> See for example, the early issues of Vers Demain, vol. 1, 1939-40, when Douglas' doctrines were first described in detail for French-Canadians.



subject to modification, even rejection. The dividend need not be retained as a Social Credit plank, as long as alternative methods could be used to increase the supply of money. Orthodox finance, including taxation, was permissible as long as some form of monetary reform could be instituted.

Given the success of Social Credit as a political movement operating within the traditional political system, the leaders of the Alberta movement were hardly inclined to accept a theory which rejected such a system outright. Douglas' ideas on the nature of parties and democracies were generally soft-pedalled within the Alberta Social Credit movement, until they were rejected in the aftermath of the 1947 purge. Institutionalization of the Alberta movement, as Irving points out,<sup>1</sup> had begun as early as 1940: by 1947 the Alberta Social Credit League was an association of constituencies organized in much the same way as any other political party.<sup>2</sup> The leaders might continue to claim that their party distinguished itself by being the only truly democratic one internally, but they could hardly condemn the party system per se as being inconsistent with democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> J.A. Irving, "Evolution of the Social Credit Movement", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, vol. 14, 1948, p. 335.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 337.



Finally the world conspiracy of bankers, Jews, and Communists was no longer an immediate concern. The business leaders in Alberta had begun to ally themselves with Social Credit in 1943, after their old antagonist Aberhart had died, and as the threat from the C.C.F. movement grew more immediate. The traditional elite were not generally attracted to heretical views, particularly those which condemned banking and high finance. Overt antisemitism was also considered contrary to business interests.

Was it the change in the composition of the Alberta movement which was primarily responsible for the shift in attitude towards the doctrine of Major Douglas? Assuming that the movement had not achieved success, and that a threat from the C.C.F. movement had not arisen, would the party have continued to espouse radical reformist views? Would there have been a more fervent attachment to the doctrine of Major Douglas? Would the likelihood of cooperating with the Créditistes then have been greater? Would there have been less conflict over means for achieving Social Credit? Was it, then, the respective socio-economic and political situations facing each section and the changing socio-economic composition of the leadership rather than the respective political cultures which were determining factors in the relations between the two branches of the movement?



One can hardly deny that among the significant variables in the split were: the nature of the issues which arose, the nature of the political situations in each of the respective provinces and in Canada at the time, and the relative successes of the two wings. It seems likely, nevertheless, that on issues not directly related to Social Credit theory, particularly those close to sensitivities of French-Canadians, conflict would have arisen out of different orientations no matter what the compositions of the respective movements.

Evidence at first does not seem to support such a hypothesis. Consider, for example, the problem of conscription. It has been a traditional thorn in French-English relations in Canada. But would it have developed into such a bitter issue within the national Social Credit movement if the Alberta wing had maintained its original anti-establishment and radical ideological stance? Douglas had interpreted the war as a conspiracy foisted upon an unknowing people by leaders of both sides, by Nazis, Fascists, Bolsheviks, Jews and Free-Masons, as part of a joint plan to capture control of the world. In his view it was therefore foolish to participate in the war, since this would be tantamount to aiding the world plot. Aberhart and Manning did not accept this interpretation of Douglas.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The twists and turns of the federal Social Credit M.P.'s on the issues of participation in the war and conscription and their relationship to Aberhart, Manning and Major Herridge, are a complex story which cannot be retold here. See Mary E. Hallet, "W.D. Herridge and the New Democracy Movement" unpublished M.A. thesis, Queen's University, 1964.



Each supported the war effort, in part to divert attention from his internal political difficulties.<sup>1</sup> This enthusiasm of the provincial leaders for the war was at least partially responsible for the emphatic declarations by some federal Alberta M.P.'s in favour of conscription.<sup>2</sup>

One might conclude, then, that it was the political context (e.g. Aberhart's being in power, his internal difficulties, his need to find a diverting issue) rather than a conflict in orientations (e.g. western constituent and elite attitudes in favour versus eastern constituent and elite attitudes against the war), which was largely responsible for the conflict. Had the political contexts in the two provinces been more alike, both wings would have shared similar "orthodox" attitudes. In other words according to the preceding, it was the political context in Alberta rather than the pro-conscription attitudes of the Albertans which determined the policy stance of the Alberta federal M.P.'s.

Yet if one looks at the attitudes of those Social Credit voters whom the movement's leaders and M.P.'s were

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<sup>1</sup> On this point see J.A. Irving, op. cit., p. 334.

<sup>2</sup> Another factor was that these M.P.'s as "New Democracy" candidates had originally campaigned in support of the war. Most important, as noted below, they were responding to pressures from their constituents. One should also note that most of the Social Credit M.P.'s were immigrants from the British Isles.



supposed to represent, one tends to adopt a different point of view. In Alberta, particularly in the "Bible Belt", attitudes ran, generally, strongly in favour of participation in the war and even conscription, for both moral and historical reasons.<sup>1</sup> Exactly the opposite was true for Quebec, for rather different historical and moral reasons.<sup>2</sup> The Social Credit leaders of each wing were clearly favouring the stance most in line with the attitudes of their constituents, and most probably because they were a product of precisely the same prairie or Quebec background and culture. Even the most "orthodox" of Douglasites could not have disregarded such attitudes and survived. In other words prairie political sub-culture shaped the attitudes of the western M.P.'s and would have influenced even the most orthodox Douglasite to modify his position. In Quebec, the sub-culture reinforced attitudes of orthodoxy. Undoubtedly, differences in attitudes, beliefs, values about politics -- that is, in political subcultures of prairie and Quebec Social Crediters -- were significantly responsible for the conflict over conscription.

#### The issue of orthodoxy in respect to Douglas' economic

<sup>1</sup> The historical reasons in the West related to the attachment to the mother country which was felt by westerners who had emigrated from the British Isles. The moral considerations related to ideas of patriotism and the need to help beleaguered friends and relatives overseas as well as the feeling of revulsion against fascist tyranny.

<sup>2</sup> The historical reasons in Quebec related to the traditional desire by French-Canadians not to be involved in European wars and their resentment at English-speaking Canadians for involving them in the past. The moral considerations included pacifist ideals and the horror of war in general.



and political ideas pointed up a similar cleavage in orientation. As early as 1940, certain voices within the Alberta movement had been raised against the basic monthly dividend. It was argued that the Supreme Court had already rejected this measure as ultra vires the provincial government. The proposal alienated a large segment of Alberta society, particularly the business community, which might otherwise have supported Social Credit. In addition, there was growing concern that Douglas had gone too far in his ideas about a world plot. And many had misgivings about the "union of electors" method of organization. By 1947 these so-called "realists" had won their argument. At that point, the "realism" of Alberta clashed with the "orthodoxy" of the Quebec Créditistes. Even on the federal level, where debt-free legislation would have been constitutional, the "realists" pressed for a modification of the dividend plank in the Association platform. They urged that "the world plot" thesis be underplayed. And they stressed that a "union of electors" in Douglas' terms would produce either anarchy or dictatorship.<sup>1</sup> The Créditistes would not hear of such a change. Orthodoxy was justified for its own sake; heresies could not be tolerated.

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<sup>1</sup> See C.B. MacPherson, Democracy in Alberta (U. of Toronto Press, 1953) pp. 204 and 210 ff. The Quebec Union of Electors was attacked by Dr. J.N. Haldeman, President of the National Council, as "completely dictatorial in its set-up. Mr. Even is self-appointed, and all officers in the Union of Electors or Institute of Political Action in Ontario and Manitoba are (also) self-appointed with the blessing of Mr. Even and assistance of his organizers". Reply of Dr. J.N. Haldeman, to Mr. Louis Even, Canadian Social Crediter, January 22, 1948.



Abandoning the basic dividend would be tantamount to rejecting the Douglas Theory. The "world plot" was ever more apparent, and the plotters were even beginning to infiltrate the Social Credit movement. They were transforming the movement into an ordinary political party, organized along traditional lines, and subservient to financiers.<sup>1</sup>

Why were the Créditistes more tenacious in their doctrinal beliefs? The political and general culture of Quebec,

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<sup>1</sup> See note 1, p. 36 above, quoting the article in Le Soleil. In his reply to Dr. Haldeman, January 30, 1948, Even wrote "I never said that the province of Quebec was the only place in the world where the Social Credit forces were not headed or controlled by communists. I said -- which is quite another thing -- that the province of Quebec, being privileged to be almost entirely Catholic, it was much easier there to come to agreement on principles and policies.. and that this same privilege was a precious safeguard against communistic or masonic infiltrations into a movement which, on the temporal plane, seems to us so well in accord with the ways of our Church on the spiritual plane". He also distinguished between the various "unions of electors, built around voices of the electors" in Ontario, French Manitoba and New Brunswick, of which he approved, and the social credit leagues of Saskatchewan and Alberta, organized "along party lines" which he condemned. Most important, he clearly admitted his charges against Premier Manning and the federal M.P.'s: "I mentioned several times Premier Manning's name. I said that, as reported in the Social Crediter of England (Douglas' Secretariat), Mr. and Mrs. Manning were won to Zionism". And, "I declared -- and Douglas many times before me has hinted if not used the same terms -- that a real freemason and a real Social Crediter cannot flock together. The reporter claims I said that two thirds of the Social Credit M.P.'s in the House of Commons are masons. This again is not accurate. I mentioned that at least two of them are masons, adding that perhaps two-thirds of the rest are lenient to masonry".



as shaped by the Church, the schools, and the family appears to have played a large part here. The dividend was regarded by them as equivalent to a tenet in Catholic doctrine. The organization and methods of the Union of Electors were modelled on the most advanced ideas of Major Douglas and could serve as a model for other Social Credit provincial organizations. The members of a movement were rigid in their ideological outlook on other issues, such as conscription and election participation. All appear to originate from the same source: the strain of rigidity and orthodoxy in their Catholic culture. In fact, at the time of the 1948 split, Louis Even even went so far as to admit that this was a key factor shaping the Quebec movement.<sup>1</sup>

One might perhaps object by pointing to similar elements in the Albertan political culture. There was the Bible Belt, in southern Alberta, which was the most fertile soil for Social Credit in its early days. Attitudes shared by people in this region were similar to the attitudes of most religious, French-Canadian Catholics. There was a parallel fervency in religious belief which transferred itself to the political realm. Doctrinal heresy was similarly abhorred.

<sup>1</sup> For example, see his statement, quoted in note 1, page 52 above, that "the province of Quebec, being privileged to be almost entirely Catholic, it was much easier there to come to agreement on principles and policies .. and that this same privilege was a precious safeguard against communistic and masonic infiltrations into a movement which, on the temporal plane, seems to us so well in accord with the ways of our Church, on the spiritual plane".



There was a similar devotion to the "dividend" on these grounds. And the depression had hardened attitudes there to anything short of total reform.

But there were several important differences as well. For one thing, the radical and evangelical strain in the culture of Alberta was most closely identified with their perpetual state of economic unrest. The fact that Aberhart had appealed most to former United Farmers in 1935 is an indication of this. Religious evangelism itself was bound up with economic discontent.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas in Quebec religious orthodoxy was most generally found among conservative, traditionalist-minded people who called for preservation of their way of life, in Alberta it was the radical-minded who were the believers. Hence when economic conditions had begun to improve, after the economic solutions proposed by the Social Credit movement had been rejected by the federal authorities, there was a ready willingness among Albertans either to return to more orthodox economic ideas or to transfer their allegiance to newer and more promising economic reformist ideas such as those put forth by the agrarian socialists in the C.C.F. movement. Whereas in Quebec, religious and cultural orientation was a more autonomous and constant variable in the social equation, in Alberta, it was more dependent

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<sup>1</sup> See J.A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta (U. of Toronto Press, 1959).



and subject to changing economic conditions. It is not surprising therefore, that attitudes of Social Credit orthodoxy were more widespread and durable in the Quebec Social Credit movement than in Alberta.

Such factors of course, cannot be taken in isolation from other forces which were affecting the political situation in each province. In Quebec, in contrast to Alberta, the leaders of the movement made no direct attempt to appeal to business groups, who were after all, mostly English-speaking. Although the Créditiste movement did find itself in opposition to the C.C.F. movement, (in part because Church officials such as Cardinal Villeneuve had tended to condemn the two reform movements as being part of the same "left-wing" conspiracy)<sup>1</sup> the threat from the C.C.F. group was so slight as to be of no real moment in the considerations of Créditiste strategists. Thus there was no need to modify the movement's appeal in order to adjust to possible and actual changing political conditions.

Secondly, in Alberta the original leader, William Aberhart, who had been the old antagonist of the business community and the radical prophet of the movement, had died in 1943, allowing for a more ready reformulation of party ideology by a new prophet. In Quebec the original leaders and ideologists Louis Even and Gilberte Côté, remained at the helm

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Vers Demain, November 15, 1941.



throughout the 1940's and 1950's. It was only after some of their former "children", the members of the second generation of Social Créditistes, challenged their leadership in the late 1950's, that a marked change in the ideological and doctrinal outlook of the Créditiste movement took place.<sup>1</sup>

The widening difference in orientation between the Alberta and Quebec wings finally manifested itself in a dispute over the organization, control and policy of the national association itself. Ostensibly a doctrinal dispute over whether the association should operate as a loose federation of unions of electors or a more tightly-knit national party, it was in reality a struggle over who would determine the basic orientation, ideology and direction of the federal movement.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt that this is precisely how the conflict over philosophies of organization was perceived by both sides. For example, in his letter to Solon Low of February 5, 1948, Dr. Haldeman wrote: "I see no possibility or any use in trying to work with them (the Union of Electors of Quebec) further. Their plans for setting up an opposing national organization are already far advanced. Mr. Even has been proceeding for the past year to set up an opposing organization in every province. It is time now for us to consider the organization of Social Crediters in the province of Quebec who will be willing to cooperate with other provinces in a free and democratic manner". As for Mr. Low's attitude, in a letter to Louis Even on February 17, 1953, he wrote, "You try to spread the idea that I am attempting to interfere in Social Credit matters in your province. That is entirely false. But I ask you .. did you ask me or anybody else in the National Social Credit Organization if you could send your representatives into the Peace River country and into Manitoba and Ontario to spread your doctrine of the Union des Electeurs? I don't seem to remember ever receiving any request from you".



The odds were against the Quebec movement. They had only one representative in the federal parliament, whereas the Alberta movement had 13. The national leader, Solon Low, was in Ottawa, and remained in close contact with Premier Manning and the chairman of the National Council, Dr. J.N. Haldeman of Saskatchewan.<sup>1</sup> He chose the editor-in-chief of the newspaper and the head of the national office. The first vice-president, Mr. Grégoire, was generally in Quebec, and wielded little influence in Ottawa strategy meetings.<sup>2</sup> M. Even, the Quebec representative on the

<sup>1</sup> It was the "purging" action of the former (Manning) and the appeals of latter (Haldeman), which appeared to drive Mr. Low irrevocably along the collision course which he took, seemingly against his own will. For example, he seemed most reluctant to break with Mr. Grégoire, despite Haldeman's argument that "I see no possibility or any use in trying to work with them further". Letter to Solon Low, February 5, 1948. On January 28, 1948, he had written to Mr. Grégoire, after reading Even's charges and after receiving a letter from Grégoire foreshadowing his resignation: "I am not unmindful that every movement and organization if it is worth anything, has to grow from a humble beginning; I think that we should not, therefore, be thrown into a panic when we feel growing pains". This may, however, have been largely said out of courtesy and a desire to maintain a strained but real friendship with Mr. Grégoire, whom Mr. Low clearly respected. Mr. Grégoire seemed to share these sentiments. See for example, his letter to Mr. Low, some months after his resignation, in which he wrote "I have really regretted the incidents, which have brought about a certain rupture, at least superficially, between certain of our Alberta friends and us. I hope that time, along with good faith and good will on the part of all interested parties, will one day put things back in order." Letter to Solon Low, April 12, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Low seemed to be particularly sensitive to this fact. For example, in his letter to Mr. Grégoire of January 28, 1948, he wrote "I welcome the opportunity of exchanging views with you, my right-hand adviser, and of receiving your counsel and advice. Perhaps the big mistake that has been made in the past has been failure on our part to consult with each other more often with regard to the affairs of the National Movement. I accept responsibility for a good share of this failure. There are extenuating circumstances".



National Council, was likewise only one of 8 members who, moreover, rarely met.<sup>1</sup> The Quebec movement could either acquiesce in the decisions made by the Albertans or opt out of the Association entirely. They chose the latter course.

B) THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE RALLIEMENT DES CREDITISTES AND THE NATIONAL SOCIAL CREDIT PARTY LED BY ROBERT THOMPSON, 1958 - 1963.

The formation of the Ralliement des Créditistes in 1958 out of a splinter group of the Union des Electeurs was indirectly linked to a desire on the part of the national Social Credit movement to re-establish their former association with

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<sup>1</sup> That this was an irritant is attested to by Mr. Even's comment in a letter to Mr. Low on July 11, 1945, a year and a half after the founding convention of the National Social Credit Association: "To return to the subject we talked over in Quebec City on the 27nd of May: You know that I frankly expressed my dissatisfaction with the fact that the National Council had not met once since April 1944; and that public stand was taken in some instances without consulting it, even I think without consulting the vice-president, Mr. Grégoire. You appreciated my frankness and gave some explanations for not having called any meeting of the National Council. You further suggested a meeting of the Council for the middle of August, and this met with our approval. We are anxious to know what you have finally decided about it". It is not surprising, therefore, that the voluntary absence of both Mr. Even and Mr. Grégoire from the November, 1947 meeting of the National Council, and the subsequent failure on the part of Dr. Haldeman to mail either one a copy of the minutes of that meeting, created much ill will on both sides. See, for example, the letter from Grégoire to Solon Low, January 27, 1948.



the Quebec movement. Solon Low, we may recall, had promised in 1956 to organize a Créditiste branch in Quebec in opposition to the Union des Electeurs. His agents were to be former members of the old Ligue du Crédit Social, the precursor of the Union des Electeurs.

Solon Low's promise did not materialize in the form he envisaged. But some of the very Créditistes whom he had sounded out on the matter helped to instigate a far more important schism from within the "berets blancs" movement itself. A number of old Ligue members attended the private meeting held in Quebec City in May, 1957, (just before the 1957 general election) in which Réal Caouette and his electorally-minded cohorts in the Union were exploring the possibility of reuniting all Social Credit factions in the province. One or two were also in attendance when the Ralliement des Créditistes was actually launched, on September 20, 1957, in a meeting held in the Mount Royal Hotel in Montreal. It was declared then to be a new body established within the Union des Electeurs movement for the purpose of rallying new members to the Créditiste cause. In fact, however, it was the instrument for proclaiming an entirely new Créditiste political group, independent of the former leaders. In the spring of 1958, after the differences between the directors of the Union and the group headed by Réal



Caouette had been aired openly, the Ralliement formally and publicly proclaimed its independence.<sup>1</sup>

The Ralliement des Créditistes was originally composed of a splinter group of politically-minded members of the berets blancs. For the most part they were younger men, the "second generation" of Créditistes, who had grown restless during the years 1949 to 1957, when the Union had either curbed or eliminated all participation in elections. The use of techniques such as "pressure politics" had proved to be less than rewarding, and the brief foray into provincial politics through an alliance with the Liberals in 1956 had proved disastrous. A number of them had come to disapprove of the "dictatorial methods" used by both Mr. Even and Mme Gilberte-Côté Mercier,<sup>2</sup> who had been responsible for bridling

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<sup>1</sup> Vers Demain, May 15, 1956, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Mme Côté-Mercier, née Gilberte Côté, was the daughter of an affluent Montreal businessman named Rosaire Côté, who had been one of the first Quebec members of Social Credit. Gilberte, a graduate of the University of Montreal, had very early shown qualities of leadership, and became a vice-president of La Ligue du Crédit Social, headed by Even, and others, at a very young age. In 1939 she helped found Vers Demain, the Quebec Social Credit newspaper, and became Even's co-editor. She also became a director of the Institute of Political Action, and the de facto leader of the Union of Electors. Even Louis Even was said to be dependent on her. She married Gérard Mercier, one of the leading apostles of the Union of Electors, in 1946.



their campaign ambitions.<sup>1</sup> They had also become concerned about the deteriorating image of the Créditistes, whose military and religious symbols,<sup>2</sup> fanatic attention to religious doctrine and practices, and alienation from the more respectable elements of the community had earned them the nickname "oddball sect" ("fantaisistes").

<sup>1</sup> Charges of "dictatorship" were levelled against Even and Gilberte almost from the very inception of the Union des Electeurs. Thus Armand Turpin, a leading Quebec Social Crediter in the 1930's and early 1940's, wrote to Louis Even on August 14, 1944: "Several people in the past have written to me or have told me that they don't like your methods, your means of action, and that we can never succeed in this manner. At Toronto (the founding national Social Credit convention) 5 or 6 of our delegates came to me to tell me that they didn't like (prisaient) the dictatorial direction which you and Mlle Côté were giving the movement in our province .. As an example of this dictatorial method which several people didn't like, and not the most insignificant people either, let me cite that of the last congress, where the delegates in the assembly didn't have the opportunity to discuss the means to be taken to achieve our political objectives. Several had the impression that they were being treated like schoolchildren (*enfants d'école*) and not like free men.

.. It is easy to impose on a crowd as heterogeneous as that of 600 enthusiastic Créditistes an entire policy line (*ligne de conduite*). You are able to impose your views and those of Mlle Côté without permitting them to discuss them".

Later, these charges became centered around the monolithic and dictatorial structure of the Institute of Political Action, the directing body of the Union, which was chosen by Even and Gilberte after their own self-appointments. See p. 51 above, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> They included the "white beret", the white flag containing a torch and a book of life, the military formation, and often crucifixes.



The leaders of the new group were Réal Caouette, the only member of the old movement ever to win an elected office, Gilles Grégoire, son of J.-Ernest Grégoire, who had never been a member of the Union des Electeurs,<sup>1</sup> Gilbert Rondeau, a former full-time Créditiste organizer, and Laurent Legault, a candidate of the Créditistes in 1944, Caouette's organizer in Pontiac in 1946, and the organizer-in-chief of the 1948 provincial campaign. They determined that the shortest and most profitable road to Social Credit was through participation in elections, and the most promising new device for promoting this participation was the medium of television. The cost of T.V. time was prohibitive, but the leaders reasoned that the original expense could be defrayed by means of gifts and loans, until such time as the movement had recruited enough members to be self-financing. Caouette began his new venture by borrowing \$30,000 from the Caisse Populaire in Rouyn, or enough to pay for a sequence of 26 bi-monthly broadcasts in Rouyn-Noranda, beginning in the fall of 1958. Their initial success prompted the leaders to initiate a series in Jonquière, in the Lac-Saint-Jean area, a few months later. By the end of the following year Quebec and Sherbrooke were

<sup>1</sup> According to Grégoire, it was his "independence of spirit" which kept him from joining the movement his father headed; but a more plausible explanation is that his mother's opposition to the movement was sufficient to keep all her children from joining, including Gilles. Interviews with Gilberte and Gérard Mercier, Maison St-Michel, May, 1965. Also with Laurent Legault, June 1965.



added to the list of regions receiving the Social Credit broadcasts. A newspaper, Regards was launched under the directorship of Mr. Grégoire. Membership in the Ralliement climbed steadily from the original 11 to 880 at the end of the first year (1958) and 5,900 at the end of the second. By 1960, when Mr. Thompson made his first direct contact with the Quebec movement under Caouette, the Ralliement already exhibited "a fine organization system"<sup>1</sup>.

The Ralliement did not establish formal ties with the national Social Credit Party until that time. Although ostensibly in sympathy with the partisan aims of the national movement, it was not yet prepared to link itself with that organization. There were several reasons for this. First, the National Social Credit Association was still nominally under the leadership of Mr. Solon Low, an old antagonist of the Créditistes. Secondly, the western representation, after reaching a peak in 1957 with the election of 19 Social Crediters (13 from Alberta, 6 from British Columbia), was completely wiped out in the Diefenbaker sweep of March, 1958. The national organizers had turned inward rather than outward in an attempt to rebuild broken fences. Finally, Mr. Low himself was in poor health and was forced to resign his position. The National Social Credit organizers were faced with the dual task of electing a new national leader and building a new

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<sup>1</sup> Interview, by the author, 1964.



national organization capable of waging an effective federal campaign.

It was with this purpose in mind that Robert Thompson drove to Rouyn in the spring of 1960 to meet with Messrs. Legault and Caouette. Thompson had only rejoined<sup>1</sup> the Social Credit Party the year before, after being in Africa from 1945 to 1957 and on lecture tours in the United States and Canada for two additional years. On his return to Canada he immediately attached himself to Mr. Manning, and attempted to build a national organization which would give the Alberta Premier the incentive to run federally. Beginning in Alberta and British Columbia, where a base for the movement already existed in the form of the provincial Social Credit Leagues, Mr. Thompson, as chief national organizer, spread Social Credit Associations into the remaining Prairie Provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and then into Ontario. It was in Ontario that the western movement "made its first direct contact with the Quebec movement under Caouette",<sup>2</sup> and it was Robert Thompson himself who established the link. He had already driven his automobile 20,000 miles in a few months. Now it was a matter of spending a few additional weeks with Messrs. Caouette and Legault, learning about the organization they had established, coordinating it with the western movement, and

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<sup>1</sup> He ran as a federal New Democracy candidate in 1940 and was narrowly defeated.

<sup>2</sup> Interview, 1964.



setting the ground rules for a meeting of all wings in a national convention, which had been called for that summer.

At the summer convention, held in Ottawa on July 28-29, a new constitution was drafted which formalized the de facto decentralization of the national movement. Only the provincial associations were to have the right to issue membership cards and form constituency associations. Only one provincial association in each province could be recognized by the national party. A national executive was elected and charged with the task of preparing for the election of a new national leader the following summer. Robert Thompson was named president, and Réal Caouette was chosen vice-president, along with Orvis Kennedy, the chief organizer of the Alberta Social Credit League, and Herb Bruch of the British Columbia provincial association. Thus the Quebec movement was already given a prominent role in the selection of the new national leader. Regards remarked of the 1960 meeting: "Its dominant note was undoubtedly the frank collaboration and sincere agreement among all Social Crediters of the country, no matter what their province or whether they spoke English or French."<sup>1</sup>

The following year preparation began in earnest for the summer leadership election. In Quebec, representatives to the 1961 convention<sup>2</sup> were chosen from among the most active

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<sup>1</sup> Regards, September 1, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Technically, the 1961 convention was the second half of the convention which was begun in 1960.



members in each constituency association. In many cases a constituency delegation was led by a man who had already been chosen as candidate for the next federal election. These representatives were, for the most part, former members of the "berets blancs", marginal rural farmers, urban workers, and small-town entrepreneurs who had disagreed with the anti-political orientation of Louis Even and Gilberte Côté. But there was also a new element that had been added: the more highly respected professional or community office-holder who was approached to join the movement in order to improve its image among the voters. Among them were, for example, Dr. Guy Marcoux of Quebec, a General Practitioner and member of an old and respected French-Canadian family in Quebec-Montmorency, Maurice Côté of Chicoutimi, president of the regional association of the Saint-Jean Baptiste Society, Gérard Chapdelaine, a young Sherbrooke lawyer and member of a prominent family in that area, and Jean-Louis Frenette, of Portneuf, senior mayor of his constituency. These men were unfamiliar with the ways of Social Credit organization, and unversed in the doctrine of Major Douglas. But they were readily elevated to the most important positions within the movement, and generally given a vital voice in all internal party discussions.

At that time the Ralliement des Créditistes was a comparatively small party, with a few thousand members, affording a limited number of tasks for each member to perform.



First, there was the job of organization. This was generally left to the local people in each constituency, most of whom were old-time Social Crediters who had helped to build up the Union des Electeurs in the 1940's and 1950's. On the provincial level, however, the job of strengthening the Ralliement organization was largely in the hands of two men, Fernand Ouellet and Laurent Legault.

The former originally associated himself with the Créditistes when they leased premises for their head office in his building on de Valliers Street in Quebec City. He soon became the chief collector of revenues for the Ralliement. He established the "carte de membre", the method of self-finance which enabled the Ralliement to expand its television audiences and membership so rapidly. Under this system, part of the \$12 collected from each member for annual dues was turned over to the provincial organization, and the remainder was retained at the constituency level. Ouellet also devised other means for filling the Ralliement treasury. He established a "club des cents", which was designed to encourage the more prosperous members to donate \$100 gifts to the movement, and sponsored activities aimed at soliciting funds from the smaller corporations in Quebec.

The latter was in charge of expenditures. Whenever someone on the provincial Ralliement executive wrote a cheque on the Ralliement account, it had to be countersigned by him.



The editor of Regards also signed cheques involving expenditure in connection with the printing and administration of the newspaper. And the travelling expenses of men like Caouette, Legault, Grégoire and others were to be paid from the same fund, although the largest burden of these expenditures was supposedly sustained by the men themselves.<sup>1</sup>

The provincial organization of the Ralliement consisted almost entirely of the coordination between Ouellet, Caouette, Grégoire, Legault and, after 1961, Dr. Marcoux, who became editor of Regards, succeeding Grégoire. These men used the newspaper, the mails, and tours of constituencies as the major means for establishing the constituency associations of Social Credit in the different regions of the province. Following the tactic employed so successfully by the Union des Electeurs, they established small "cells" in each community or parish, and charged the initial members with the task of selling the membership cards to their neighbours. The inducement for the members was the opportunity to see Caouette on television. If enough money could be collected by the local association, a television programme featuring either Caouette, or in the Saguenay-Lac Saint Jean area, Grégoire, would be beamed into their area.

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<sup>1</sup>An informer has denied that this was so. Caouette and Legault are said to have kept a separate account against which their expenses were charged. The revenue was supposed to have been taken from funds returned by the constituency associations to pay for television and provincial administration. The evidence that this was in fact done appears, however, to be insufficient.



It was Legault and Ouellet who, just before the summer leadership convention of 1961, organized conventions or meetings in enough constituencies throughout the province to enable the Ralliement to send close to 300 delegates to the national convention. This was the largest representation of any of the provinces by far. Yet all the Quebec representatives were not united behind the leadership candidature of Réal Caouette. The outcome of his candidature was further complicated by his overt modesty concerning the probability of his election.

The vote for the leadership occurred on the afternoon of the fourth day (July 7). The delegates from Quebec had been treated to three days of speech-making and personal campaigning by the four major candidates, Messrs. Patterson of British Columbia, Hahn and Thompson of Alberta, and Réal Caouette of Quebec. Both Thompson and Caouette claimed that they had little expectation of even entering the competition, let alone winning it. Thompson had hoped that Premier Manning would become leader of a rejuvenated movement. The latter had protested, however, that his health was not up to it and, moreover, his interest and experiences were too provincial for this kind of post. Subsequently Robert Thompson, because he was a man of international experience, and because he had shown ability both in public speaking and organization work, was thrust into the forefront. At the last minute, he had agreed to run.



Réal Caouette had entered, according to his own account, merely to give the leadership struggle a bilingual and binational flavour. Much to his surprise, he polled the most votes of any candidate on the first ballot. Messrs. Patterson and Hahn had been eliminated: the choice on the second ballot was between himself and Thompson. At this point Réal Caouette began for the first time to think seriously of himself as a party leader. He launched an earnest campaign to win the delegates over to his side.

The two Social Credit premiers, Manning and Bennett, were at the convention, and wielded considerable influence both on the speaker's platform and in the lobbies. After Patterson had been defeated, Bennett, who was a rival of Manning's both in temperament and political position, swung the support of the British Columbia delegation behind Caouette. He liked the Quebec leader's flamboyant and colourful political style, which was akin to his own. And he sought to undercut the support given by Mr. Manning to Robert Thompson. Numerically there were enough Quebec delegates present to elect Caouette the national leader, with British Columbia support, even if all remaining Social Credit delegates had voted for Thompson. However, some of the Quebec delegates present were openly cool to the idea of selecting Caouette. Some of these were old-time members of the Union des Electeurs who had joined the Ralliement in spite of, rather than because



of Caouette. They remembered him as a flamboyant and outspoken campaigner for the old movement, but as an indifferent worker. They recalled his self-centered posture at past Union congresses. They were doubtful about his capacity for leadership, and his emotional stability.<sup>1</sup>

There were other, new Quebec delegates to Social Credit, who chose to judge the issue in terms of the personalities and capabilities of the two men who were running. Many of them did not know Caouette well; they had only met him once or twice previously. They were not singularly impressed. Caouette was dynamic on the political rostrum, but his views lacked a certain moderation or subtlety. Robert Thompson seemed to them to be a more judicious speaker, a man with a broader vision. A national leader had to represent the views of all Canadians, rather than a minority segment. Moreover, Thompson's personality was pleasing to these men; a chiropractor turned missionary, he operated in a low-keyed, modest but firm fashion, more in tune with the norms of professionals and community notables.

Certain incidents added to these preconceptions and prejudices. When the subject of the national platform had

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<sup>1</sup> Caouette had never been much of an "organization man". He was not known for his openness of spirit or mind. And he was given to drinking and moods of depression. On the night before the election, he is reported to have protested that he was unfit for the position of leader. Information from an informer, summer, 1965.



arisen, Caouette had argued for a national dividend of \$100 a month, to be paid to every Canadian. This had long been repudiated by the westerners as a politically unrealistic and harmful plank. Caouette finally withdrew the motion, but only after alienating a number of potential supporters.

Then, just before the final vote was taken, Premier Manning had arisen to remind his audience that being a French-Canadian and a Roman Catholic would prove to be a serious handicap to any leader campaigning in the west.

When the vote was counted, Thompson had been elected leader by a slight majority. It was then moved and passed unanimously that Réal Caouette would be the deputy leader. Thompson and Caouette interlocked their arms and raised them in a show of amicable unity.

What had caused Caouette's defeat? Probably, it was the opposition of the group of dissident former "berets blancs" who voted for Thompson over Caouette. One or two of the so-called "modernistes", or newer Créditistes, had also voted for Thompson. This was enough to prevent Caouette from being elected.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested by an informer that Caouette actually won the ballot, but that he agreed to step down after a private session with Premier Manning, Orvis Kennedy, the Alberta Social Credit League President, and Thompson. Kennedy, who presided over the convention, had the ballots burned. In fact, what appears to have happened is that 5 of the Quebec delegates had voted twice for Caouette, so that the total number of ballots cast was greater than the total number of eligible voters. The private meeting was called between Caouette, Thompson and Kennedy to prevent this event from being made public and forcing a new election. Caouette appears to have acceded because he realized he had lost and would lose again in a second election.



Had Premier Manning influenced many to vote for or against Caouette? Among Quebecers his warning appears to have produced a dual reaction, which may have cancelled itself out in the actual vote. There were some French-Canadians who might have voted for Thompson but whose nationalist and religious sensitivities had been wounded to the point where they could no longer do so. Others who leaned to Caouette had second thoughts after Manning's intervention: on purely pragmatic grounds they felt the Alberta Premier had made a telling point.

Among English-speaking delegates it is unlikely that the Premier's remark had any marked influence. Most of the English-speaking delegates were supporting Thompson anyway; among those who weren't, the British Columbia delegates were unlikely to change their allegiance on provocation by the man who was more than anyone else, their primary target of opposition.

Far more important than its influence on the actual vote, however, was the effect Manning's intervention had on the attitudes and beliefs of the Quebec delegates directly involved. According to Réal Caouette, Premier Manning had exerted "pressure", and has said "right in black and white that the West would never accept a French-Canadian, a Catholic French-Canadian, as leader, at least in his own province".<sup>1</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> Interview, April, 1964.



was substantial proof that the Alberta premier was "anti-French-Canadian". Further it cast doubt on the friendliness of Thompson, who became, in the opinion of Caouette, the puppet of Manning. The attitude of Caouette was shared sometimes even more strongly, by several of his closest associates, including Gilles Grégoire and Laurent Legault.<sup>1</sup>

The vote, too, had made a lasting imprint on the mind of Caouette. He felt betrayed by some of his own supporters, but he was unable to identify them precisely. It was natural for him to lay the blame on the shoulders of the new members, with whom he was least acquainted and with whom he had less in common in background, interests and temperament than his former "berets blancs" colleagues. The idea that the new members had betrayed him was first suggested to Caouette by some of his former "berets blancs" colleagues, who were anxious to regain some of their lost influence with the Ralliement leader. This then, was the real starting-point for the schism of 1963.

Ostensibly, at least, eastern and western Social Credit were firmly united in a common onslaught on the old-line parties in the period from 1961 until the general election of 1962. The Ralliement met in a provincial convention in Hull just after the national leadership convention. Laurent Legault here outlined his strategy for the 1962 campaign, which

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<sup>1</sup> Interviews, 1964.



was only a slight modification of the plan which he had outlined over 15 years earlier, in the 1948 provincial campaign, in which he acted as the organizer-in-chief.<sup>1</sup> The organization for each constituency would consist of an organizer-in-chief, section organizers for every 10 polls (or 1000 votes), and an organizer proper and assistant organizer for every poll (or 100 votes). To build these cadres, the organizer-in-chief and section organizers were to hold two public assemblies in succession within a month's interval. The object was to expand the association of some 10-15 organizers to 100 or 150 by means of a campaign of intensive recruitment and by devolution of assignments. At the second assembly, monthly membership cards were to be sold. At a third assembly, held by April 1962, members of those constituencies which had not yet elected their candidates were to form a nominating convention for this purpose.

The novel element in the strategy was the central role given to television. The 15 minute programme, already transmitted in the regions of Rouyn-Noranda, Saguenay-Lac Saint Jean, Quebec and Sherbrooke, was now to be beamed to the Bas du Fleuve, the Gaspé, and parts of Montreal. Caouette's popularity as a television performer had already become apparent; further large sums of money were to be spent on this method of

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<sup>1</sup> Laurent Legault, Guide Electoral des Officiers de l'I.A.P. (Montréal, 1948).



winning support. The cost of the programmes was approximately \$2,000 per week; for the campaign a total of at least \$70,000 would be needed. In addition, some \$20,000 was to be set aside for newspaper and television publicity. All other organizational work (e.g. scrutineering) would be voluntary.

Unlike provincial organizations in other parties, the Ralliement des Créditistes of Quebec received very little financial support from the national association or various other provincial affiliates. Money collected in Alberta and British Columbia for the Social Credit federal campaigns in these provinces remained almost entirely with the local provincial associations. Some money was transferred to Ottawa to help subsidize the national Social Credit newspaper and the numerous pamphlets and leaflets which were distributed from that source. The salaries of the national organizers were also paid from this fund. Most of this literature, however, was of no value to the Créditistes since it was printed in English only. With the exception of the salary of Fernand Ouellet, who had been named national organizer attached to Quebec, expenses incurred by Créditistes in the course of organizing and campaigning were paid for entirely by the provincial association.

It was Fernand Ouellet's job to collect this money. Most of it came from the monthly membership card, which he had devised. It was supplemented by passing around the hat at public meetings, and other, similar fund-raising activities.



Donations by corporations were virtually nil. For the Ralliement, finance by the members themselves was the guiding principle of action.

This method of finance, largely imposed on the movement by the nature of its membership, became incorporated into the ideology. Whereas the "old-line" parties had accepted large contributions from corporations, and thus were committed to policies favorable to these corporations, Social Credit was the party of the small men, committed only to the principle that every person has a social responsibility to donate to a party which is truly responsible to himself, the common voter. The method of finance of the old-line parties was tantamount to that of receiving bribes. The old-line parties had sold themselves to "high finance" and become their agents and bondsmen. The only way to reverse this trend was to elect a party truly responsible to the people. The Social Credit Rally, like its predecessor the Union of Electors, was demonstrably such a party. Its method of finance was proof of this.

Equipped with this combination of highly "visible" campaigners in the person of Réal Caouette, Gilles Grégoire, Guy Marcoux and others, and with an "invisible" mass army of enthusiastic workers,<sup>1</sup> the Ralliement entered the June 18

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<sup>1</sup> The concepts of "visible" campaigners and "invisible" organization were propounded by Laurent Legault himself as early as 1948. It was his strong belief that the former were ineffective without the latter. Organization was the key to the Ralliement success, in his mind. The results seemed to have proved him right.



election campaign in a spirit of buoyant optimism. Its opportunities for success were further enhanced by the political and economic conditions in Quebec. An economic depression of rather severe proportions had existed since 1959, particularly in rural areas. Mr. Diefenbaker, the Conservative prime minister had just engaged in a public confrontation with the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Mr. James Coyne, and had emerged from the struggle slightly scarred. His image in Quebec was also tarnished by his seeming inability to integrate his Quebec M.P.'s effectively into his party and cabinet. Finally, the Union National Party, which had supported the Progressive Conservatives in 1958 and had provided the cadres for their candidates, was now in shambles as a result of their defeat in 1960 by the reform-minded provincial Liberals led by Jean Lesage. They were both unwilling<sup>1</sup> and unable to provide the necessary support for the P.C.'s. The federal Liberals, led by Lester Pearson were scarcely in better shape. Their organization in Quebec was tired and archaic, and needed a complete reforming. Their leader appeared unable to command the kind of enthusiasm that the benign old gentleman, Louis St. Laurent, was able to arouse in French Canada. Further he had no Quebec lieutenant of the prestige and stature of Mackenzie King's right hand, Ernest

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Johnson, the Union National leader, was said to be cool toward Diefenbaker. The shortage of manpower and funds at this time were also factors in this unwillingness to cooperate.



Lapointe. The New Democratic Party had just been formed from the old agriculturally based C.C.F. party and the trade unions. It had no Quebec leader, and no organization to speak of in the province. Its predecessor had never won a seat in Quebec before. And it suffered from its identification with "socialism" a word which was still anathema to most French-Canadians. For many, the Ralliement campaign slogan "You have nothing to lose, vote Social Credit" had real meaning.

In the west the prospects seemed almost as good. Although the Diefenbaker Party continued to have an excellent image there, largely through the success which Agricultural Minister Alvin Hamilton had had in selling wheat abroad, it seemed unlikely that it would be able to retain the entire block of seats it had won in the sweep of 1958. The Liberal forces in the West had been demolished in that year, and had commanded no great support in provincial contests since. Their recent stands in Ottawa on devaluation were hardly likely to win votes from the farmers.<sup>1</sup> The New Democrats were undergoing transformation. Most important, the Social Credit administrations of Messrs. Manning and Bennett had just won

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<sup>1</sup> They had opposed the emergency devaluation and even advertised that fact, despite the fact that devaluation had raised the price of wheat.



resounding votes of confidence in their respective provincial elections. The one discouraging note was the inability of the Social Credit League of Saskatchewan to elect a single candidate in the provincial election of June, 1960, even though they had presented a full slate. But it was felt that with a new leader, a well-established base of support in the west, an effective organization, and financial and manpower aid from the provincial leagues, the party would at least win back the seats they had held before their 1958 debacle.

The expectations which each of the wings (east and west) had about the other's chances of success were an important factor in the split which later ensued. The Créditistes were led to believe that the western wing would capture at least a dozen seats in Alberta, British Columbia, and perhaps Saskatchewan. Most newspaper predictions were slightly below this figure, but then the newspapers had never been overly favourable to Social Credit in the west. The report came from western Social Credit organizers, more familiar with the local political situations, although also inclined to be somewhat optimistic in their estimates. On the other hand, westerners did not expect overly much from their eastern confrères. Quebec newspapers scarcely mentioned the Créditistes. None of them predicted any seats for the party, at least in the early stages of the campaign. Western Social Crediters had been given rather glowing reports of organizational successes from



their eastern counterparts. But they had heard such things before, in the days of association with the Union des Electeurs, and had learned not to give them too much credence.

These attitudes were severely shaken when the results of the June 18th, 1962 election were announced. The Ralliement des Créditistes, under the leadership of Réal Caouette, had amassed 25% of the popular vote in Quebec, and 26 of the 75 seats. Among the candidates elected were several of the "new" Créditistes like Dr. Marcoux in Québec-Montmorency, who had the largest plurality in all of Canada, (20,039), Jean-Louis Frenette, of Portneuf, J.A. Roy in Lévis, Gérard Girouard in Labelle, Gérard Chapdelaine in Sherbrooke. In addition, former "bérrets blancs" like Henri Latulippe of Compton-Frontenac, Gérard Perron of Beauce, and Gilbert Rondeau of Shefford, as well as Caouette himself in Villeneuve and Gilles Grégoire in Lapointe were returned with, in some cases, well over 50% of the votes in their constituencies.

In the West, on the other hand, only 4 candidates were elected: Robert Thompson and H.A. Olsen in Alberta, and Bert Leboe and A.B. Patterson in British Columbia, all old-time Social Crediters. And none of these had achieved overwhelming pluralities.



The results further strengthened Caouette's belief in his right to the leadership (or at least a substantial share of the leadership) of the party. When Robert Thompson convened a meeting in Ottawa of all Social Credit M.P.'s a few days after the election in order to plan strategy and allocate responsibilities Caouette responded slowly and with apparent reluctance. He had already organized his own press conference in Rouyn, before C.B.C. cameras, journalists and photographers. His reply to the invitation was: "If you want a meeting, come here, to my chalet on Lac Dussault".<sup>1</sup> Thompson and Dr. Marcoux were forced to fly to Rouyn, and fetch Caouette from his chalet. At the meeting it was decided that Dave Wilson, then national organizer in Ottawa, would serve as national coordinator for western Canada, and Fernand Ouellet would become national organizer for the east. Dr. Marcoux was nominated as whip. Little else was said. Caouette, obviously annoyed, left for his chalet, accompanied by Thompson, Marcoux and Legault. Cameras clicked and flashbulbs popped, as the two leaders embraced. But there was an obvious coolness between them, and several astute newspapermen were quick to notice it.

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<sup>1</sup> From interview with Dr. Guy Marcoux, August, 1965.



There were a number of other frictions before the new Parliament convened.<sup>1</sup> At the meeting in Lac Beauport a few days after this first encounter, some of the old Créditistes like Perron and Rondeau had complained to Caouette that "new Social Crediters like Marcoux and Ouellet were beginning to wield too much influence",<sup>2</sup> and the Ralliement leader put the blame on Thompson. At this point, Perron began to influence other former "berets blancs" like Latulippe, Rondeau, Laprise, Bélanger of Charlevoix against the so-called "modernistes".

This incipient conflict was aggravated by the choice of provincial executive members and the election of a new provincial president at the Three Rivers congress of the Ralliement in August. There was, first of all, some opposition to the election of Laurent Legault as provincial president to succeed Caouette, who retained the position of Ralliement leader. Certain of the better educated, newer members of the Ralliement had pointed to the fact that Legault's French was not perfect, that he lacked a certain bearing, that he could not command prestige in circles outside the party. They attempted to

<sup>1</sup> These include slightly different interpretations of Social Credit policy towards Diefenbaker's austerity programme, and towards the Common Market.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Dr. Marcoux, 1965. Perron in particular felt his name had been overlooked in the nominations for the principal posts of "Presidents of temporary parliamentary committees", comprising a kind of Social Credit "shadow cabinet". See Le Devoir, June 29, 1962.



convince Roland Bertrand, a Grondines (Portneuf) accountant, who had been associated with the "berets blancs", to oppose Legault, but were unsuccessful. The incident helped to alienate Legault from the more educated elements in the party. In addition, according to the draft of the new Ralliement constitution, written largely by Fernand Ouellet and Dr. Marcoux, five members of the new provincial executive of about 18 were to be elected from the M.P.'s. Before the congress, they chose tentative representatives, who would automatically sit on the provincial executive if the draft were adopted by the plenary body of the congress. None of those named in the first ballot were former "berets blancs", or "gilbertistes", in Legault's terminology. Caouette, who was present when the original vote was taken, termed it a "stab in the back". He could not work with the men who were elected. Following his instructions another vote was held according to his own modified system and Rondeau, Perron, Grégoire, Langlois and Dr. Marcoux were elected, in that order. It seemed to some that Caouette had deliberately tampered with the vote in order to ensure his own clique's election.

Finally, the so-called "Affaire Mussolini-Hitler" had serious repercussions internally, which related directly to the split. It concerned the famous interview statements that Caouette had made that his foremost political heroes were Mussolini and Hitler. When asked to clarify what he meant,



he explained that he was thinking in terms of their leadership capacities and economic reforms rather than their political achievements.<sup>1</sup> The effect on the English-speaking Canadian population was adverse, and Dave Wilson asked to attend a caucus in order to speak about them. He urged that the members make their public declarations more reflective. Some of the "gilbertistes" were outraged by Wilson's interference. At the Three Rivers Congress the matter was discussed briefly, and Caouette was exonerated on the grounds that he had been misinterpreted. Thompson and Caouette stood together on the platform, and once again raised their arms in a show of unity. But the issue had driven a deeper wedge between Thompson and Caouette.

When Parliament met at the end of September, a sentiment of mutual acceptance and even camaraderie existed among the different factions within Social Credit. The Social Credit M.P.'s dined together and socialized with each other. Apparent differences in attitude towards policy matters melted away in a general euphoria. Only in caucus meetings did some tension remain, and this generally arose over the statements and actions of Réal Caouette.

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<sup>1</sup> See Le Devoir, August 24, 1962. The Original Statement appeared in MacLean's, August, 1962.



Caouette was often absent from caucus meetings in this early period. He had become a public celebrity of sorts, and was therefore frequently engaged as a speaker by various associational groups. Many of the statements he made were used by the press to reflect badly on him, and to cast some aspersions on the purity of the Thompson-Caouette marriage. The matter was of concern to the Social Credit members, who debated it in caucuses.

Inevitably on these occasions a colleague of Caouette's, generally a "gilbertiste", would rise and defend the Ralliement leader. Allusions would be made to his great campaign contribution. Most of the "gilbertistes" would readily concur. The "modernistes", on the other hand, who were less awed by the qualities of Caouette, and less concerned with his indispensability to the party, sometimes took him to task for his indiscretions. Western M.P.'s generally sat in uneasy silence.

The most serious single issue of disagreement among the caucus regulars was the emphasis to be given to matters of French-Canadian language and national pride. The Social Credit M.P.'s from the east, and in particular those who had previously belonged to the Union des Electeurs, were incensed over the fact that menus in Parliament restaurants were printed only in English, that the standard text on parliamentary procedure, by a French-Canadian, Beauchesne, was unavailable in French



translation,<sup>1</sup> that a certain bulletin by a certain minister was not issued in both languages. The westerners were generally embarrassed by these interventions, but said little about them, recognizing that they were points of sensitivity. However, some of the more bilingual and better educated Créditistes, notably Dr. Marcoux (who as whip had to approve all questions and motions made by his colleagues), were genuinely ashamed. In particular, they disapproved of the constant harping on the same item, often of a trivial nature. And they discouraged foolhardy and bullheaded interventions made in complete disregard of accepted norms of parliamentary behaviour<sup>2</sup>. Occasionally their irritation was carried to the point of condemning outright such "beret blancomania".<sup>3</sup> These quarrels were generally smoothed over after a period of time. But they left a residue of bitterness and wounded sentiments.

<sup>1</sup> The objection was first raised when the Speaker, Mr. MacNaughton, had suggested to Mr. Bernard Dumont (Bellechasse) that he acquaint himself with proper parliamentary procedure before making interventions. Dumont was expelled from the Chamber for refusing to come to order. He had been attempting to intervene on behalf of Quebec farmers.

<sup>2</sup> From interviews with Chapdelaine, Frenette, Marcoux, 1964 and 1965. See Post, Part IV.

<sup>3</sup> The term was used by Chapdelaine. Interview, 1965.



The really decisive catalyst for the split did not occur, however, until the very end of the session.<sup>1</sup> What had united the Social Credit M.P.'s over all, in spite of their differences, was their common and unanimous desire to avoid an immediate election. Caouette himself shared this sentiment, despite his consistent criticism of Prime Minister Diefenbaker's austerity programme. But the Créditiste organizers at the grass roots, accepting at face value Caouette's statements as well as press and television reports about a Social Credit wave in the province, began to demand the overturning of the government. The coup de grâce was the fumbling of the cabinet on the nuclear weapons issue, and the resignation of Mr. Harkness. It was clear at this point that it was only a matter of time before Mr. Diefenbaker would be defeated by a combination of the three opposition parties in a vote of non-confidence. At this point, a number of the Créditiste M.P.'s themselves began to call for Mr. Diefenbaker's resignation.

On the afternoon of February 4, 1963, Robert Thompson called a caucus of his 30 Social Credit M.P.'s. There are two

<sup>1</sup> In November, 1962, the issue of participation in the provincial election, which had been debated at the summer conference came to a head. It did not, however, concern all of the "new" Creditistes. Guy Marcoux and Fernand Ouellet were the strongest advocates of provincial participation; Caouette was firmly opposed to it. The latter's view predominated even among the "new" Creditistes. See also below Chapter IV (h) (2).



conflicting reports as to why he did so. According to Réal Caouette, "all of a sudden Thompson had received orders from Manning to overthrow the Diefenbaker Government. Diefenbaker had made some statements against the United States. So ... Manning, who was dealing directly with the United States - and who is controlled by the United States, I'm convinced of it - received an order from somebody in the United States to pressure Thompson so that the Government would be defeated. And this is the true reason why the election took place in April, 1963".<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Peter Newman, in his book Renegade in Power<sup>2</sup>, gives credence to this version. "It was under pressure from Manning that Thompson ... added another item to his terms of supporting the Conservative government: John Diefenbaker's head ... Manning seemed to have two main reasons for demanding the Prime Minister's resignation. He must have felt that the anti-American election campaign that was bound to come under Diefenbaker would seriously hurt the economy of Alberta. He was also known to believe that as long as Diefenbaker remained head of the Conservative party, Social Credit could not

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<sup>1</sup> Interview, 1964. Diefenbaker charged the American State Department with interference in attempting to win Canada's acceptance of nuclear warheads for Bomarc missiles.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Newman, Renegade in Power (McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1963).



significantly increase its Prairie representation.<sup>1</sup>

The opposing version is supplied by Mr. Thompson. Manning had been in Ottawa the week previously, it is true, but "we didn't even talk about (the overthrow of Diefenbaker), except that we agreed that unless the Conservatives showed some action there was not much justification for letting the parliament go on ... I made no demands concerning the overthrow of Diefenbaker at all. I was not interested in playing politics".<sup>2</sup>

What did actually occur in the caucus? Caouette was not present. According to Dr. Marcoux, Thompson first asked to hear the opinion of others on the question of voting in favour of non-confidence. Marcoux came out strongly opposed. Others followed. Then Thompson declared that he was personally against an election but would submit to the opinion of the majority. When the vote was taken, the majority were in favour. The final decision was taken in a smaller caucus held that evening. Marcoux and another M.P. worked on the motion of non-confidence. It was submitted to the caucus for approval, and then tabled in the house. It was worded in such a way as virtually to ensure that the other two parties would accept it. The next day it was carried.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Newman, op. cit., p. 369-70.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Robert Thompson, April, 1964.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Dr. Marcoux, August, 1965.



Caouette, upon hearing of the motion late that night, attempted to block it. He called Marcoux by long-distance telephone. The next day he arrived in Ottawa, and immediately called together the caucus. He met with a rebuff, even from his closest supporters. He tried other channels, including acting Defence Minister Sévigny. All proved of no avail.

The motion had been put by Thompson, and seconded by Marcoux. From the vantage point of Réal Caouette, it looked as if the two had engineered the entire business. From that moment on, Réal Caouette became outwardly hostile towards both Marcoux and Thompson.

Was Caouette justified in placing the blame on the shoulders of these two men? According to their own accounts, not at all. Both had spoken against the motion, and had only agreed to accept it when the majority had opposed them. But why had they then attached their names to the motion? Presumably, because they were the official representatives of the party in parliament. Why, then, had Caouette, as deputy leader, not been included? According to Dr. Marcoux, an unsuccessful effort was made to find Caouette. But was that sufficient in so grave a matter, which so directly involved the Ralliement's chief campaign figure? Surely the caucus vote could have been postponed until Caouette was consulted. One has the feeling that even if there was not a concerted effort to undermine Caouette, there was at least a desire to capitalize



on his absence. Whether this desire was shared by a majority of the caucus, or whether it was confined to a few men who were clever enough to exploit it is something which one cannot ascertain positively. Evidence points to the former, namely a general desire to profit by Caouette's absence. Even some of his closest associates of earlier years were pressing for the overthrow of Mr. Diefenbaker. If Caouette was betrayed, it was by "gilbertistes" as much as by western Social Crediters and "modernistes".

After the dissolution of Parliament in February, 1963, a result in large part of the Social Credit initiative, Caouette became openly estranged from the national executive and Mr. Thompson. He failed to attend the meeting of the executive called in late February in order to discuss electoral strategy, including the question of nuclear arms. Ouellet and Legault were there, as was Dr. Marcoux. Even Gilles Grégoire appeared for a few moments, and then excused himself. Ultimately an agreement was reached. But Caouette never personally adhered to it, as newsmen covering the campaign gleefully noted. And his close colleagues, like Legault and Grégoire, soon followed his lead.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Guy Marcoux, August, 1965. Grégoire is alleged to have excused himself for a few minutes in order to make a phone call. He did not reappear.



There were at least two policies on nuclear arms: Caouette was unalterably opposed to the acceptance of nuclear weapons on Canadian soil or for Canadian troops abroad, whereas Thompson was much more ambivalent, claiming that: "No Canadian political leader can say squarely "yes" or "no" to atomic political armaments, and none can say "never" to defensive nuclear arms".<sup>1</sup> On February 25, the 75 Quebec candidates of the Ralliement des Créditistes voted on a resolution of Gilles Grégoire which categorically rejected nuclear weapons of all kinds for Canadians troops at home or abroad. Sixty-six supported it including all of the sitting M.P.'s except Gérard Chapdelaine of Sherbrooke and Jean-Paul Cook of Montmagny-l'Islet. From that point on, the two leaders did not even attempt to conceal their differences on the matter. But they attempted at least to show a common front in economic policy. And they rationalized their political disagreements as a normal and acceptable practice in a plebiscitarian party like Social Credit.<sup>2</sup>

On the subject of bilingualism and biculturalism, Caouette was an outspoken advocate of French-Canadian rights.

<sup>1</sup> See also Grégoire's resolution on the nuclear weapons issue below. Legault was impatient with any attempts made by Ouellet or Marcoux to close the breach over nuclear weapons policy. Interview, Guy Marcoux, August, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> See Laurendeau, Blocs-Notes, Le Devoir, March 4, 1963. This reference to the plebiscitarian tradition of the Alberta party was made by Mr. Thompson on several occasions, in explaining why he permitted the Créditistes to adopt a separate position on the nuclear weapons issue. Compare this to Mr. Low's position on conscription, above, p. 28.



But he made clear his opposition to separatism, professing a faith in national unity and in the ability of French and English Canadians to cooperate with each other. On this point, then, there was no fundamental disagreement with Thompson, although their conceptions of what comprised national representation for the two groups undoubtedly differed.<sup>1</sup>

Among most Social Crediters, both of east and west wings, the expectations of success were very high. In the West Premier Manning's former luke-warm endorsement of their party in 1962 had turned to wholehearted support. This was due in no small part to a change in his attitude towards the Diefenbaker Conservatives. Formerly he had accorded them a grudging respect; now he felt only contempt for them. In the east, despite a sustained assault on the Créditistes from various quarters, including Jean Marchand, C.N.T.U. President, Eric Kierans, Montreal Stock Exchange President, and Premier Jean Lesage himself,<sup>2</sup> the general feeling among press and pundits was that the movement was on the rise. The name of Réal Caouette, unfamiliar to most in 1962, was now on many people's lips. His broadcasts were watched with much interest, and, it seemed, considerable enthusiasm. His public meetings were far and away the best attended of those of any party leader.

<sup>1</sup> See for example, below Chapter IV (e).

<sup>2</sup> See various issues of the Montreal Star and Le Devoir, March-April, 1963.



It was probably this expectation of mutual success, more than anything else, which tempered each leader's attitude towards the other, and caused each to play down his differences with the other. Nevertheless, the expectation was quite different from 1962. Now it was the east which was expected to win the largest number of seats, up to 50, it was thought. The western M.P.'s with the new asset of posing as part of a truly national party, could now hope for a better representation. But it was unlikely to have anything near the total of the eastern wing. Thus Réal Caouette no longer felt the same need to conform to a common party programme, particularly one which was framed largely by the English-speaking group.<sup>1</sup> And he no longer felt himself in any sense the deputy or subordinate of Mr. Thompson.

Réal Caouette's moderate public expressions masked bitter thoughts. He no longer trusted Robert Thompson, nor the Quebec M.P.'s who had become closely associated with the western leader. Fernand Ouellet, the national organizer for the east, no longer accompanied him on his campaign tours, as he had done the previous year.<sup>2</sup> And Dr. Guy Marcoux, out of

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Le Devoir, Feb. 7, 1963. A seemingly contradictory statement that "Ouellet was then still very active" was made by Dr. Marcoux, Interview, August, 1965. But it is likely that the Quebec-Montmorency doctor was thinking of Ouellet's position in the national organization, and his work in Ontario and New Brunswick.



favour with Caouette, was no longer informed of strategy and events. He was forced to confine his campaign activities in the province almost entirely to his own constituency of Quebec-Montmorency. He did not even participate in the climatic public assembly in the Montreal Forum on April 5th, three days before the election.<sup>1</sup>

When the results were announced, there was general disappointment. The Social Credit representation in parliament had been reduced from 30 to 24. Eight Quebec members had been defeated, and only 2 new seats had been captured by narrow margin.<sup>2</sup> A number of leading Social Credit M.P.'s, including Bernard Dumont of Labelle, J.P. Cook of Montmagny-l'Islet, J.A. Roy of Lévis and Lauréat Maltais of Saguenay had been defeated. Others had had their pluralities drastically reduced. The various leaders of the Social Credit factions looked vainly for an explanation. And they searched even more aimlessly for a way out of the impasse.

In Dr. Guy Marcoux's mind there was an urgent and immediate need for defensive action against Caouette. Unless he acted to strengthen the party's position in Parliament, his

<sup>1</sup> Interview, August, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> The members who lost their seats were: J.A. Roy (Lévis) Bernard Dumont (Bellechasse), J.P. Cook (Montmagny-l'Islet), Philippe Gagnon (Rivière-du-Loup-Témiscouata), Lauréat Maltais (Saguenay), Gérard Lamy (St-Maurice-Laflèche), André Bernier (Richmond-Wolfe), David Ouellet (Drummond-Arthabaska). The two newcomers were: Gérard Ouellet (Rimouski) and Gérard Girouard (Labelle).



own influence internally would dissipate. Caouette would almost certainly write him out of the party, together with those who had demonstrated a sympathy for his views -- Chapdelaine, Côté, Lessard. One way out of the dilemma was to negotiate an agreement with one of the two large minority parties (for no party had emerged with an overall majority) which would enable them to govern. The Liberals had the largest representation. But in Marcoux's mind, as well as in that of some of his closest friends in the party, they were undeserving of support, in view of the "dirty" campaign they had fought against the Créditistes in the province. A coalition of Progressive Conservatives, N.D.P. and Social Credit seemed a more tolerable alternative.

Réal Caouette's initial reaction to the results was one of dismay and bitter resentment. The Liberals, aided by American high finance and Premier Jean Lesage had done him in. In order to take revenge, he would fight Lesage on the provincial plane. The charges levelled against him were completely false. "I haven't arms, an army. I am not a Mussolini, or a Hitler, a dictator. I am a French Canadian who wants to help his country".<sup>1</sup>

Even then he did not deny the possibility that his party might support the Liberals if they presented an economic

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<sup>1</sup> Le Devoir, April 9, 1963.



programme aimed at prosperity.<sup>1</sup> And when he had an opportunity to collect his thoughts, he allowed that though disappointed, the Créditistes were not discouraged. After all, they had increased their popular vote total from 26% to 28%.<sup>2</sup>

Caouette outlined his struggle ahead in Ottawa and in Quebec.<sup>3</sup> Then he turned to internal party tactics. Either because he was still very suspicious of Dr. Marcoux, or because he was deliberately trying to sow the seeds of dissension between the party whip and leader, Caouette warned Thompson of Marcoux's alleged acceptance of a Liberal cabinet post offer. Chapdelaine was also supposed to be joining a Liberal Government.

At a party meeting in Ottawa, which Caouette attended, the two (Marcoux and Chapdelaine) denied the allegations against them. But Caouette was not satisfied. Privately he initiated a move to divest Marcoux of his position as whip.

It was at this juncture that the notorious "Affair of the Six" occurred. Six Créditiste M.P.'s signed a notarized statement in which they agreed to support the Liberals in power: Gerard Perron (Beauce), Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford), Raymond Langlois (Mégantic), Pierre A. Boutin (Dorchester), Robert Beaulé (Québec East) and Lucien Plourde (Quebec West). All of

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Le Devoir, April 9, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Le Devoir, April 10.



them were former members of the "bérrets blancs", and most of them were close friends of Caouette. They were assisted in their endeavour by Alex Bertrand, a party vice-president and a former active leader of the "berets blancs". The object of this declaration was apparently to force Prime Minister Diefenbaker to resign, and thereby ensure that the Liberals would be called into office. They sent one copy to the Governor-General and a second to Liberal leader Lester Pearson.

The immediate response of the public to this declaration was adverse. Social Credit supporters of the M.P.'s were outraged. Two of the signatories, Beaulé and Plourde, immediately sent a telegram to the Governor-General disassociating themselves from the statement. Another, Pierre Boutin, followed soon after.

Dr. Marcoux had called Robert Thompson upon learning about the matter from a Toronto journalist. Marcoux and Marcel Lessard, caucus president, were asked to investigate the entire matter. Dr. Marcoux immediately convened another meeting in Ottawa, in which both victorious and defeated M.P.'s were invited. The western M.P.'s except for Bert Leboe had not yet arrived. Caouette objected that the caucus was illegal, but attended anyway. The "six" were questioned, along with Bertrand and their testimonies were contradictory. There was some consternation among a number of the Créditistes. But a larger number expressed their agreement with the six in principle,



particularly when Caouette arose and defended them. This was tantamount to an open confrontation between the whip and deputy leader. Dr. Marcoux pressed for the expulsion of the "six" from the Ralliement. He also demanded that Caouette resign from his position as leader.

Caouette retaliated by rallying his supporting forces. He persuaded the members of the Quebec contingent of Social Credit M.P.'s to issue a "vague" communique in which they declared the matter a "closed incident". The six had all repudiated their declaration. They had also sworn in writing that they had received no remuneration for their offer of support to the Liberals. On that basis, the "six" were given a "clean bill of health" and allowed to remain members of both the Ralliement and the national Social Credit party. No further disciplinary action was to be taken against them.

Even the western Social Credit M.P.'s were disinclined to press for sanctions against the "six". There had been a meeting of the 4 western M.P.'s with the national president, Martin Kelln, and the president of the provincial Social Credit League, Mr. Orvis Kennedy, in Alberta. Mr. Thompson issued a statement from Red Deer promising Social Credit party support to the Pearson Government in the coming session. Thus he seemed to be granting what the "six" had tried to bring about by their independent actions - a Pearson government with majority support. No immediate action would be taken against



the "six". Another caucus would be held just before the opening of the new parliamentary session, in which a final decision would be made on their case.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Mr. Bert Leboe, the M.P. from Cariboo, B.C., who was the only one in attendance at the Ottawa caucus, virtually exonerated the signatories. They had committed a minor fault which had been precipitated by declarations made both by Caouette and Thompson suggesting that Social Credit would support a Liberal Government. At the same time, he denied categorically that there had been any aggravation of differences between the leader and deputy leader over the affair.<sup>2</sup>

At this point Caouette pressed ahead with his advantage. He charged Laurent Legault to begin preparations for a special assembly in Quebec which would take disciplinary action against Dr. Marcoux. The same provincial council was supposed to examine the actions of the "six" and of Mr. Alex Bertrand. However, the delegations were selected so as to ensure that former "berets blancs" would be predominant.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Marcoux did not wait for the axe to fall. A week before the special Quebec assembly he resigned from the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Le Devoir, April 17, 1963.

<sup>3</sup> Le Devoir, May 11, 1963.



executive of the Ralliement. After a caucus of all Social Credit M.P.'s in Ottawa, he added his party resignation. Henceforth he would sit as an Independent in Parliament. It was clear to him that he could not command any support from the western M.P.'s. And the Quebec M.P.'s sympathetic to his grievance against Caouette and the "six" remained silent.

At the special provincial council meeting of the Ralliement, held in Quebec four days before the opening of the new session, Réal Caouette took the first of a series of concrete steps bringing about the split. As one astute reporter put it, "in the intimacy of a "chosen" audience of about 200 Ralliement activists he carried out a purge of what he called 'subversive elements' in the party".<sup>1</sup> He had expelled Fernand Ouellet, national coordinator for the eastern provinces, P.E. Lapointe, a front-ranking Créditiste in Quebec and chief organizer of Dr. Marcoux in Quebec-Montmorency, and J.P. Cook, former M.P. from Montmagny l'Islet (who was later reinstated and permitted to appear before a disciplinary committee). These elements had infiltrated the organization in order to undermine Caouette and destroy the Ralliement. Caouette also denounced Dr. Marcoux, declaring that "although an honest man, a man of heart, he allowed himself to be led astray by Fernand Ouellet".<sup>2</sup> Caouette once more absolved the

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<sup>1</sup> Le Devoir, May 13, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Le Devoir, May 11, 1963.



"six" of all blame, and reminded the assembly that these men were all longstanding and good Créditistes. Alex Bertrand submitted his resignation as vice-president, but was permitted to retain his post in the Ralliement office in Quebec City. The Ralliement leader also condemned the policy followed by Social Credit leader Robert Thompson, whom he labelled a pawn of Premier Manning of Alberta. Neither were real Social Crediters<sup>1</sup> since they did not want a national dividend. In some respects Manning was even a socialist.

Most interesting of all, Caouette conducted what amounted to a self-confession before the delegates. Stung by criticisms of his affinity for drink which was reportedly affecting his diabetic condition he promised to curb it in the future. He also admitted that rumours concerning the near bankruptcy of his Rouyn enterprise, Joyal Motors Ltd., were true. He had avoided failure by borrowing \$50,000 from a Rouyn bank, with the help of the late P.C. Senator Mark Drouin, and by obtaining a loan of a further \$50,000 from his fellow M.P. from Roberval, C.A. Gauthier. Another 25,000 credit had been obtained from the Caisse Populaire of Rouyn, likewise with

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. He also warned: "I retain my faith in the possibility of a national entente but not one which leads to the pure and simple assimilation of Quebec" a warning signal of the ultimatum which followed.



Senator Drouin's help.<sup>1</sup> It was clear that Caouette was reacting against what he considered to be a real threat to his leadership from within the Ralliement.

Yet these problems seemed only to goad him on in his determination to rid himself of all those whom elements he considered to stand in his path. He became more trenchantly nationalistic in his policy and more select in his associations.<sup>2</sup> Soon after the parliamentary session began, J.P. Cook, former M.P., resigned from the Ralliement, declaring that Caouette, Legault and their valets, all former "gilbertistes", were dominating the movement. He called on the national Social Credit party to expel the Quebec provincial association. At the same time he admitted that among the sitting Créditistes there were "men of worth". He listed four of them: Maurice Côté, Gérard Chapdelaine, Marcel Lessard of Lac Saint-Jean, and Jean-Louis Frenette of Portneuf. All four were among those who, later remained with Robert Thompson when the split occurred.<sup>3</sup> A few days later the Social Credit executive of Quebec-East, the constituency of Robert Beaulé,

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., also from an interview with Dr. Marcoux, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> It was at this time that Dr. Marcoux, who was still a member of the Ralliement, openly deplored the return of the spirit of Gilberte Côté to the provincial party. Le Devoir, May 16, 1963.

<sup>3</sup> Le Devoir, May 24, 1963. Cook had apparently been accused of mishandling funds.



one of the "six", resigned en bloc from the Ralliement, claiming that they had been unable to get to the root of the matter involving the "six". Soon after 57 organizers in Québec-Montmorency, Marcoux's constituency, followed suit. Caouette meanwhile, seemingly undeterred, issued an ultimatum to the national executive, asking them for a "special representative" for Quebec, who would have access to all correspondence and financial statements. This was in addition to the representation given to Réal Caouette as Deputy leader and Gilles Grégoire as one of the three regional vice-presidents. At the same time he called for election of a bilingual national leader. He threatened to withdraw from the national party if the request were refused.

It was purely a tactical maneuver. On April 30, well before the internal Ralliement party differences had come to a head, he had determined to challenge the national party and its leadership.<sup>1</sup> His major complaint was that the western Social Crediters were disregarding the national dividend, a key portion of the doctrine of Major Douglas. The man most responsible for this "drifting from the philosophy of Major Douglas" was Ernest Manning, the premier of Alberta.

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<sup>1</sup> A letter was sent by Caouette to Mr. H. Gallagher, a Toronto party member, on this date, in which he expressed these views. See Le Devoir, June 5, 1963.



According to Caouette, Manning exercised control over Robert Thompson through two major levers: personality and finances. Thompson was "afraid" of the Alberta Premier. And he relied upon Premier Manning and the provincial movement for donations of \$1,500 a month. Manning's explicit orders were that none of the money should be diverted to Quebec. And Fernand Ouellet, acting as an agent of the national association, had acquiesced in this policy.

The National Council of Social Credit met in early July to consider the demand. Its decision was a foregone conclusion. They rejected the ultimatum. They reaffirmed their support of Robert Thompson as national leader. And they voted to recommend to the next national convention that the position of deputy leader be abolished.

Caouette grasped at a final straw in his hope of succeeding Robert Thompson as national leader. He charged Laurent Legault, president of the Ralliement, to prepare the annual congress of the party to consider a resolution recommending the displacement of Robert Thompson as Social Credit leader.

On the eve of the Granby convention, August 30, 1963, Robert Thompson, perhaps anticipating what would occur at the congress, (which he refused to attend himself) called for Caouette's resignation from the party. The next day Caouette opened proceedings with a stinging attack on Messrs. Manning



and Thompson. He concluded by moving that: 1) Mr. Thompson be divested of his post as national leader of Social Credit and a new national convention be held to elect a new national leader, and 2) Thompson be divested of his post as parliamentary leader of Social Credit, and the Ralliement M.P.'s select a new parliamentary leader. Both resolutions were debated and passed in the Committee on Political Orientation and ultimately carried in the plenary assembly in a near-unanimous vote of approval.

Caouette expected that all Créditiste M.P.'s would support his action. But a splinter group of five, including Gérard Girouard of Labelle, Gérard Ouellet of Rimouski, Maurice Côté of Chicoutimi, Marcel Lessard of Lac Saint-Jean, and Jean-Louis Frenette of Portneuf immediately rejected the resolution as "illegal". They argued that only a national convention of all Social Credit provincial parties could divest Thompson of his posts. They immediately convened a meeting in the Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal to plan their strategy. Dr. Guy Marcoux was invited, and at the conclusion he announced that he was rejoining the Social Credit Party. The "dissidents" also contacted Gérard Chapdelaine of Sherbrooke, who did not attend the Granby Convention. He gave them tentative support. Lucien Plourde, M.P. for Quebec West, and one of the "six" who was, however, less implicated, also expressed an interest in joining. But he asked to consult his organizers before making his decision.



Caouette retaliated by calling his own caucus in Quebec City. All of the "dissidents" were invited, but only Frenette and Chapdelaine attended. Both refused to change their position. Lucien Plourde, however, declared his support for Caouette soon after. There were then 13 Créditistes in Caouette's camp. The Ralliement leader announced that they would sit apart from Thompson's group in Parliament as a separate party.

The national Social Credit Association took the next step. They announced, through their national president, Mr. Martin Kelln, that "events at Granby demonstrated that the Ralliement, as led by Mr. Caouette, no longer desired affiliation with the national organization".<sup>1</sup> They therefore declared the Ralliement to be formally separated from the Association. Ralliement delegates would not be invited to future Council meetings or conventions. And they would have no voice in the selection of a new national leader. At the same time, the Association invited Quebec Créditistes to associate with itself and the M.P.'s who had remained loyal to Mr. Thompson.

Premier Manning of Alberta was the first to declare his satisfaction over this formal schism. It was "in the interests of the Social Credit movement".<sup>2</sup> He predicted that

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<sup>1</sup> Montreal Gazette, September 6, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Montreal Star, September 6, 1963.



the Caouette group would soon be extinguished. Robert Thompson remarking on the support accorded him by the provincial Social Credit associations of Ontario, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan scoffed at the national aspirations of what he termed "a Quebec bloc with stated separationist tendencies".<sup>1</sup> And even Premier Bennett of British Columbia was forced to take the split philosophically. It was a forerunner of similar schisms in other parties, he commented prophetically, and it would require vigilance on the part of all Canadians to prevent such party splits from accelerating the break-up of the country.<sup>2</sup>

Soon after, the Caouette contingent applied for official recognition as the Social Credit party, pointing to the fact that they now had a majority of the sitting Social Credit members in Parliament. After much wrangling, they were accorded status as a new party, designated as the Ralliement des Créditistes. (Social Credit Rally). Robert Thompson's group retained the name Social Credit Party. The two groups co-existed as such in the Canadian House of Commons from October 1963 until the general election of November, 1965. There was one slight change in this alignment: Thompson's group was reduced from 9 to 7 members in April 1964, when two of the Quebec M.P.'s, Girouard and Ouellet, crossed the floor and

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



joined the Conservative benches.<sup>1</sup>

These, then, are the events which led up to and encompassed the split between the Ralliement and the national Social Credit party. What were its immediate repercussions?

There was much consternation among the local supporters of the 7 M.P.'s who remained loyal to Robert Thompson. Why had they deserted Caouette for a leader who was not a French Canadian, and who, moreover, could not even speak the language? Their reply was that it was not they who had deserted Caouette, but rather it was the Ralliement leader who had illegally and undemocratically deserted the national party. They had simply retained their affiliation with the leader and party under whose banner they had been elected to Parliament.

In theory it was a convincing argument. A good number of the organizers of the Thompson Créditistes accepted it at first. Most members of the local association of these members at first pledged their continued loyalty to their parliamentary representatives.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Both of them were former organizers for the Progressive Conservative Party, and they announced at the time that they had no disagreement with Thompson, but had decided that joining the F.C.'s was their last hope for political survival. Neither was reelected in 1965.

<sup>2</sup> Interviews, 1964 and 1965.



But practical considerations eventually took over. Réal Caouette, determined to destroy the Créditistes who had failed to back him in his dispute with Thompson, entered their constituencies and held public assemblies of Social Credit sympathizers. He attacked the M.P.'s for deserting their national groups. Thompson was not a French-Canadian, he was not Catholic. He could not speak their language. Moreover, Caouette argued he showed little understanding of problems peculiar to French-Canada. The members who had remained with Thompson were not real Créditistes, and did not even understand the basic principles of the doctrine. None of them, after all, had formally belonged to a Social Credit group until 1960 or 1961. And most of them had first become exposed to Social Credit teachings only at that time.<sup>1</sup>

These arguments gradually won over more and more of the local Créditistes, particularly those who had formerly belonged to the "berets blancs". The local associations were split into two opposing factions. Most of the formerly active workers lost their enthusiasm, and ceased to work for the party. There were no constituency association meetings, no study circles. The organizations in most of these ridings became moribund.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Interviews, August, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



Caouette also exploited his advantage from an organizational point of view. The Ralliement des Créditistes remained intact as a provincial association which was charged with the responsibility of expanding Social Credit in the province. Its means for doing so, television, newspaper, and local association, were already firmly established. So long as Caouette still maintained most of his support among active Créditistes in the province, he was ensured of the financial means to carry on his television broadcasts. As a speaker, there was no one who could seriously rival him. No Thompsonite Social Credit Quebec M.P. could hope to win the allegiance of so many voters from such different locales and walks of life.

Moreover, none of the representatives who remained with Thompson had shown either ability or desire to organize beyond their own constituency. There was no one who could command a province-wide allegiance. None had sufficient contacts which could be used as a base of operation. Most important, they lacked any binding principle or common ideology beyond a rather tenuous loyalty to their Alberta leader, and a vague allegiance to the broad principles of Social Credit.

It is not surprising, therefore, that after a few months, they became aware of the precariousness of their position. Two of them, Girouard and Ouellet, left the party. The others gave serious thought to leaving the party as well, but decided to stay on until the next general election. At



this time it was clear to those Quebecers who remained that the only way they could hope to be reelected was to disassociate themselves entirely from the western Social Credit group. All of them ran as Independents, and all lost. A number of them did not even keep their deposits.

Caouette's Ralliement des Créditistes, on the other hand, fared considerably better.<sup>1</sup> Thus once again the association between the Créditistes of Quebec and the national Social Credit Association, with its base in Alberta, had proved abortive. Despite an evident desire by both east and west wings to forge a truly national party out of their Social Credit associations, the means for welding the two together could not be found. What had caused this failure? Why was the Social Credit party unable to do what other parties had succeeded in doing? Are there certain factors common to both the earlier and later attempts at union, which serve to explain why they had suffered common fates? Was the split largely due to "personality conflicts" and "circumstantial events", as one Créditiste had suggested.<sup>2</sup> Or were "ideology" and "orientation" more potent forces of disunity? What was the role of "finance" in the affair? And what impact did competitive ambitions have? Most important, was a split "inevitable"? And if so, why?

<sup>1</sup> Of the 13 former M.P.'s only 7 were reelected. Five of the six who were defeated, however, were signatories in the "affair of the six" and this undoubtedly alienated some of their support. The Ralliement defeated both Lessard and Frenette. It captured 19% of the Quebec vote.

<sup>2</sup> It was Caouette himself. Interview, 1964.





